SKETCH

 # 17

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THEIR SCALPEL

UNCANNY X MEN ARTIST RON GARNEY

RONG 2002

Coming Soon to the Pages of *SKETCH MAGAZINE*

JAY ANACLETO

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER...

A lot is going on here at the Blue Line Pro offices. We've been working hard to improve over the last year, and it seems someone has noticed, as the last few issues of *Sketch* have been particularly well received. We certainly appreciate you creative types that have stuck with us over time and gladly welcome our new readers, but beyond everything we're glad we're succeeding in our goal; to help educate and stimulate comic-book creativity. Naturally, *Sketch* will continue to develop, improve, and grow...and our Blue Line family is growing with it.

Comics Explorer, our latest contribution to the comic scene, begins shipping in November. Much like *Sketch*, *Comics Explorer* will feature a major interview in each issue, but while *Sketch* is jammed with instructional and creative info on *making* comics, the body of *Comics Explorer* will be filled with articles, previews, and reviews of the comics coming out or already on the market. And *Comics Explorer* won't simply be centering on just what's hot, but covering the unusual and hard to find as well – great stuff to look for in these wild market times, as new creativity and earnest efforts hit the market. As *Sketch* often does, *Comics Explorer* will also look to introduce and encourage some new talent with quality material. We hope you're applying what you're learning from *Sketch* - and college, books, life, and everywhere else, the important thing is to learn – to your comic work. Happy with what you've done, and thinking of promoting what you've worked so hard at? If you think we might be interested, send info to explorer@bluelinepro.com for possible review. Please keep your initial inquiries short and to the point.

Next is something we are very excited about and working hard to develop – our first Blue Line Pro convention! As with *Sketch* the emphasis will be on creativity, set in an environment of enjoyment and inspiration. As our con "sketch" comes to "finishes," next October we will be hosting the first major comic convention in our immediate area. POP CULTURE CON will be held at the Cincinnati Convention Center on October 3, 4, and 5, 2003. Like all cons, we'll have exhibitors, dealers, and artists, and tables for these spots are now available on a first-come first-served basis. But the *very* cool thing for our *Sketch* audience is that we will be presenting special, professionally supervised workshops on creating comic books at this show. These special workshops will run ninety minutes, costing approximately fifty dollars each. We have over twelve comic book professionals that will be the instructors at these classes. Go to www.popculturecon.com, or call 859-282-0096 for more information. These classes will fill very quickly, so I'm happy to be offering our *Sketch* readers a first chance opportunity. I look forward to meeting you all there.

This issue...

Ron Garney offers us his insights and creative habits on just how he achieves his unique storytelling style. He went out of his way to supply us with many images of his smooth comic art in various stages of development, great stuff that you should find very interesting as you admire his finished work in *X-Men*, *Captain America*, and *Hulk*. Ron's work looks dynamite on these leading Marvel titles, and you should really look into his approach to his page work. Thanks, Ron!

And as always, big thanks to those creative souls that keep showing up every sixty days with a load of creative information for us all to absorb.

Next issue – Pat Lee!

take care,
Bob Hickey
Bobh@bluelinepro.com

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Grating Expectorations

Fall is here. I hope pencils, plots, pigments, and all kinds of panel-related stuff are rolling off your work area as plentifully as the leaves are by mine. While I'm still eating up all the delicious J. Scott Campbell eye candy from last ish, it seems that time has passed – all of summer! Luckily, one can enjoy Scott's fun, fun stuff for a long time, and it's lasted me from the sweltering summer right through Halloween. Boo! I look like HBO's CryptKeeper, so I feel I deserve a treat. I hope all of you enjoyed Scott's material at least half as much as I did, and that you've been successful in tracking down a copy of his highly recommended *Danger Girl Sketchbook*. Not only is it a sheer blast to continually page through, there's almost nothing like it on the market showing the amount of labor, love, and care that an artist puts into his creations in such a detailed, exacting, and revealing fashion. Thanks again, Scott.

But...what did you do with *your* summer, bristol brothers and story line sisters? What did you imagine or refine, what did you learn, what did you create? What did you garner from the time that you've put into your comic endeavors?

Unable to attend the summer cons, I've enjoyed the backfeed of rumors, pleasantries, speculations and sniping the conventions help carry on the summer winds...and there's plenty blowing in! If you've been web surfing (or just by the bars at the cons), you're up on many of the talent comings and goings, business shakeups and setups, attacks and snide asides – some real and some fabricated for your interest – that fill the conversation and help move some of the actions in the comic book industry. As Mr. Alan Moore's debonair D. R. (a personal role model, much like Daffy Duck) asked, " Why can't everybody just, y'know, be friends and everything?"

Because the comic industry is a business just like any other. But in such a relatively small industry, now attracting plenty of visibility from the "outside," some of this can be deleterious to the industry as a whole, and certainly to you individually. As I've mentioned before, *Sketch* brings you both sides of the business, from behind the drawing board and laptop to behind the decisions at the editorial desks and conference tables, some real "down in the trenches" talk. While we emphasize creativity, don't forget this is a business – and common sense, courtesy, and interpersonal skills can be nothing but an asset to you, even if you don't feel you see or hear such traits on display by your favorite creators. With the market regaining strength and visibility due not only to things such as the *Spider-Man* movie and *Birds of Prey* TV series but some terrific book work as well, eyes are upon us from "the great outside." Check how you act, what you say, and how you look. If you hope to come into contact and do business with the movie, TV, and music/video communities – let alone people within the comic industry – be aware that business people notice such things.

Unfortunately, it's often difficult enough to work through the preconceptions of a "comic book creator," without reinforcing the stereotypes. Although it's thankfully changing, to the outside world we're still often viewed as a bunch of sea monkeys, creating within plexiglass covers. If you're ready to extend your swimming, be smooth, smart, and civil. Though often more than guilty of fun-loving hyperbole and good-natured ribbing, *Sketch* does not carry the weight of pretension or perniciousness. We're here to stimulate your thought and talent, help you improve your work where and when we can, and hope that everyone joins in and has an enjoyable and educational experience. We love comics, the process of making comics, and the world-wide community that does so...except, perhaps, the French.

For a real taste of comic book conventions...or a taste of conventions as I wish they really were, don't fail to grab a copy of fantastic Frank Cho's hilarious and wonderfully done *Liberty Meadows* comic convention issue #27. Its fresh from its Image starting gate, and convention going doesn't get any better than when drawn by Frank Cho. Can't get enough of all that fun-filled rumor mongering, carping, and backstabbing? Check into Rich Johnston's *Lying in the Gutters* column over at www.comicbookresources.com. Great "inside" stuff, with so much gossip and gaffing that you'll feel like you just got a senior editor position in the industry, if you're not already.

What? Comic Book Guy says, "Worst editorial ever."

Flint

Ron Garney on Creating Art and Storytelling

an interview by Bill Baker

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Don't be fooled by any tinge of new age flavor to the title above, folks. Despite some interest in certain metaphysical topics, Ron Garney is as grounded as they come. Rather, the flow of the title refers to the natural movement of the graphic narrative inherent to comic book stories, an essential element of craft that's overlooked at the peril of clear storytelling and confusing the readers. And for Garney, whose main concern is creating art that melds with the script within the confines of the page and the four color medium to create a seamless whole, that's the heart and soul of the matter.

For well over a decade, Garney has plied his trade and worked his way up the food chain to the point where he's now rightly assumed the regular artist post on one of the business's most prized titles, *Uncanny X-Men*. However, this isn't his first encounter with Marvel's merry mutants, or any of that company's hugely popular icons. In the recent past he's enjoyed critical success and fans' approval for his and Mark Waid's take on Captain America, and, in the wake of Heroes Reborn, helped relaunch the ongoing monthly exploits of the Hulk with John Byrne.

Throughout his journey Garney has taken it all - both the praise and complaints - with a grain of salt, chased with a strong shot of his incredibly dry humor. In other words, there's not a speck of the prima donna or hint of a "rock star" attitude to be found here, only an artist's abiding concern for clear and smooth storytelling combined with delineation that's carefully matched to the demands of the project at hand. You'll find that all of those same qualities, as well as a few others that have gone unmentioned, are on display in the following interview
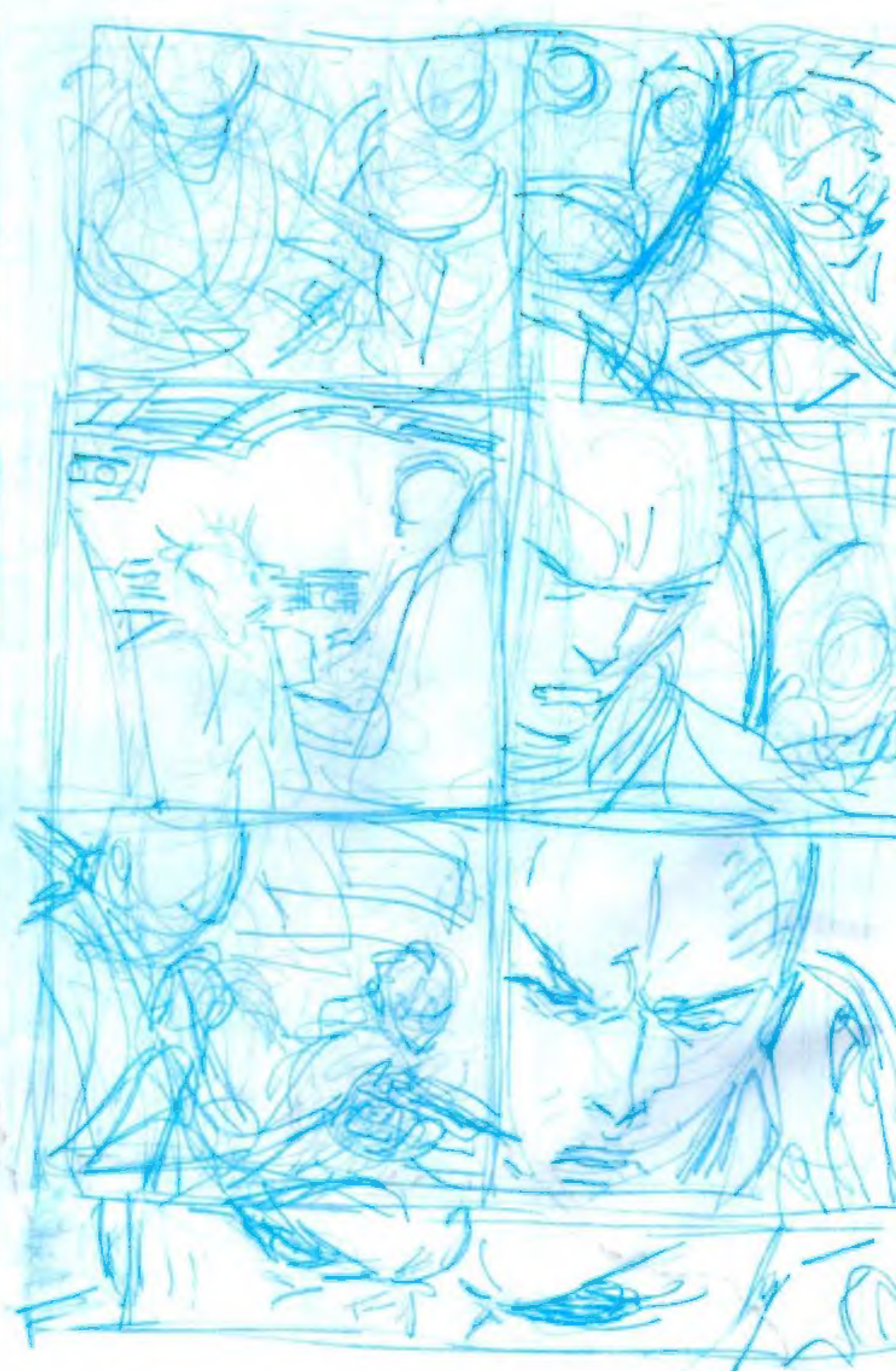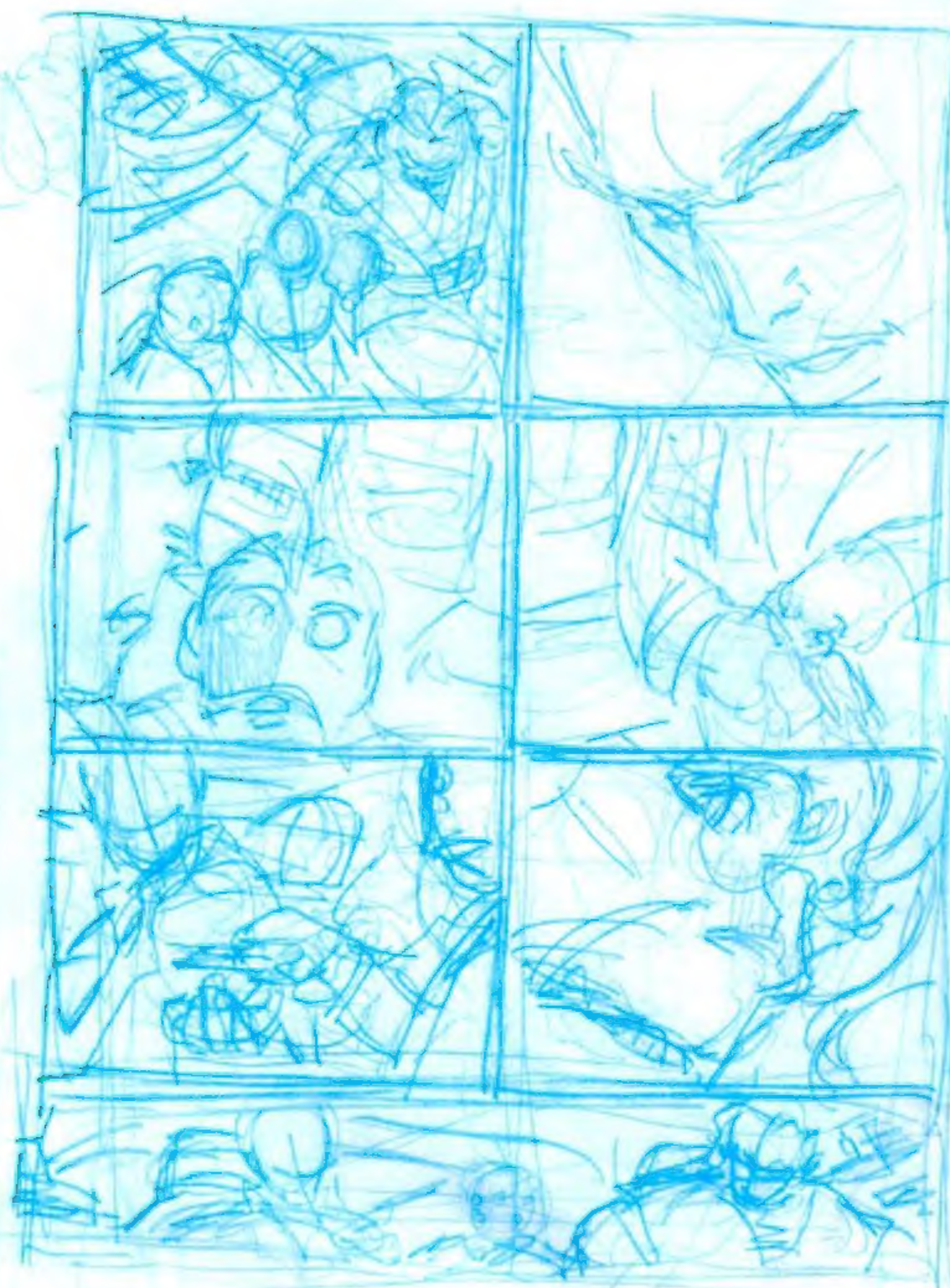
Rough Page Layouts from UNCANNY X-MEN #410 by Ron Garney.

Sketch: When did the art and storytelling bug first bite you?

Ron Garney: Which one: art or storytelling?

Sketch: Either one. Which one came first?

Ron: Well, it was probably drawing. When I was very, very young, I remember my aunt trying to get me to draw a picture of Bugs Bunny when I was like two years old. And I think I actually remember that day, and from that point on I just started drawing and it never left me. I always had a thing for super-heroes. I have drawings I did when I was three of Superman and Batman, and they were kind of funny, you know. They were [basically] labeled balloons with backward "S"s on them, with capes and stuff. It's kind of neat to look at them. [General laughter.]

Sketch: So you were filling them out even back then, trying to giving them anatomies and such, rather than just going with the easier stick figures?

Ron: Right. I actually had little capes on them, and tried to do the "S"s, but I couldn't do the letters correctly. I wasn't old enough to know the lettering, but I was still trying. It's funny when you look at it.

Sketch: And you just kept at it after that?

Ron: Yeah, pretty much. I guess so. I mean, I don't remember so much that I [can say that] I was drawing everyday. I don't know how often I was, but that was definitely the beginning.

Sketch: You mentioned that you were into super-heroes, that they really grabbed your interest.

Ron: Yeah. Yeah, at a very young age. I don't know why, they just did. Who knows? I mean you could get real deep and analyze it any which way you want. [Laughter] But I had a Batman pedal car when I was young, and my mother said that I used to put on towels and scarves around my neck and run around the room when I was little and pretending to be a super-hero, jumping off of tables and pretending I was flying and things like that. [General laughter.]

Sketch: At least you kept relatively low to the ground! [General laughter.]

Ron: Yeah, right. It was always within eyeshot.

Sketch: Were you a regular reader of comics back then?

Ron: Well, not at that age. I wasn't old enough to read. But once I was able to read, yeah, I read them. I got into them for a while, but not religiously. Whenever we'd get to the store, I'd pick some up and read them. But I didn't have subscriptions or anything like that. And I was into comics—it's interesting—I was into them for the art. A lot of times I wasn't into them for the stories.

It was interesting, because Marvel was always easier to read for the stories; it was not as much about the art [for me in that case]. But then, as I started developing as an artist, I started losing more interest in Marvel comics and started getting more into the Warren publications, like *Vampirella*, where I'd see some kind of beautiful illustration going on in there. So I started gravitating towards that, and painters like Frazetta and Richard Corben, guys like that, way back then. Back in the seventies.

Sketch: Did you also get into Heavy Metal *back then?*

Ron: Yeah. Yeah, once I started approaching my teens, I think maybe around ten, I started getting into more of that stuff, like Warren publications, and started moving away from comics per se. And I was a huge *Star Trek* fan for a long time, so comics weren't the exclusive thing that I was into. I was also into sports and, once I got into high school, it became more about girls, and music, and sports, and things like that. Just a lot of other distractions.

Sketch: How did you develop your talent when you were younger? Did you try to copy people, or trace them?

Ron: No. No, I never did. I would copy certain things. I might see a drawing I liked, and then I had a sketchbook, and I would try to copy it. I never traced anything, ever. Plus, my grandmother was a painter, my mother was an artist, and so I had a lot of exposure to other things besides comics. I even used to do the Sunday morning thing and draw manatees or animals or sea creatures, or whatever,

[along with the host] on the Sunday morning show with ... I forget the guy's name. It might have been Captain Bob or something like that, or maybe it was John Nagee. I'm not even sure [at this point]. But it was a Sunday morning show and I would draw from that. It was never just comic books. It was always a lot of other things. My grandmother was a really good oil painter, and even at a young age I was always playing around with oil paint and things like that.

Sketch: Did you decide to pursue a career in comics then, or did that come later?

Ron: I got out of comics for a long time. I wasn't reading them again until after college. I had kind of forgotten all about them. And I was bartending [during] my last year of college, and one of the other bartenders that summer, he had a comic. I think it was 1984, and it was like a *Secret Wars* or something. So I started reading it. I was, like, "Wow. This is cool!" I had forgot all about comics for like ten years or so.

I don't know, I just got into it, you know? And I asked him where he got it, and he said down the street at this little bookstore. So I went down the street to this bookstore and I bought a couple more. I think one of them was a John Byrne comic. In fact, I remember the issue. It was called "Evening of the Witch," and it was this very stark white cover with this woman on the front.

But I was just hooked from that point on. I started reading them, and I then had to keep going

back every other night to start reading these things again. [Laughter] It was weird. It just sort of hooked me, and that was the beginning of it. And I realized then that I could do that for a living.

I had just gotten out of college for art, and I didn't think I wanted to sit around painting, as a career, apples and bananas in a basket or what have you. And I started loosing interest, a little bit, in fantasy illustration. I did a lot of that all through college, so I was playing around with those fantasy art techniques [back then]. But it wasn't challenging enough to me. It was challenging, but I found the comics medium much more fascinating because I was interested in film, and I was interested in story telling, as well. And [earlier] I didn't even equate the two, you know?

Before I started reading comics again, it didn't even occur to me that was sort of what comics were—a short form of directorial story telling, or cinematic techniques, and things like that. And then when I started reading comics, it kind of occurred to me, "Wow. This is exactly what I'd love to do!" It wasn't just about the art. I mean, I knew I had to draw. But it was more about telling a story, and being able to read a small movie, in a way. That's where the real appeal came in for me.

Sketch: So when you went to college at Southern Connecticut, did you go with the idea of becoming an illustrator?

Ron: Pretty much. I mean, when you attend college you're never totally sure, you know? [Gen-

eral laughter] But that was sort of what I was interested in. But once I got to college I wasn't really sure at all. First of all, when I got to college it was a totally different animal, because all of a sudden there were twenty or thirty guys exactly like me, or better, in my class. Some were worse, but the level was always there. Whereas where I came from, I was the only one of my kind. Because I came from a very reclusive town up in northwestern Connecticut, and back when I was young, a lot of guys didn't draw. There weren't a lot of us around. I got to college, people from all over, who were just like me, were congregated in a room, so it was a totally different atmosphere. A much more competitive, obviously, and good atmosphere. It was a good atmosphere. So I wasn't sure, exactly, where I wanted to go with my art. I just wasn't sure.

Sketch: Were there any particularly good lessons that you learned during that time?

Ron: Yeah. Commitment to the craft. Don't take it for granted that you have an ability. That was probably the biggest one. Because when I left high school I didn't have an arrogant attitude, by any means, but I definitely was taking the fact that I could do what I could do for granted I think. Like I said, I had other influences once I got to college, too. You know, girls, and all those things that people are into. You know, social distractions.

But that was the biggest lesson I learned; not to take your ability for granted. If you have an ability that just is very innate, try to nurture that

Finished Page from UNCANNY X-MEN #410.

this place." So I just kept drawing hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pictures. And I was doing fake little Spider-Man stories, you know, five page scenarios here and there. I was still bartending, and I was painting, and I was doing some graphic design work for a local magazine.

And then I found out this guy lived in the area, Mike Zeck, and I gave him a call, just to pick his brain about what to do. And he asked me to send him some stuff, some of the samples I'd worked on. So I did. And he called me back, and basically told me I was good and what I needed to work on. And then I didn't speak to him again [for a while]. I didn't call him back right away. I think it was maybe a year went by or something. I was still bartending, and I was still living my little social scene there. So, after that, I just kind of called him up, and he brought me to Marvel and DC, and I had a few offers on my answering machine when I got home.

Sketch: So you were pretty close to being ready, obviously. [General laughter.]

Ron: Yeah. I was probably ready a year earlier, but I didn't show Mike the second set of samples I did. I think my drawing ability was there. I think, with me, it was just some minor storytelling alterations that I needed to work on. So, that's pretty much how it happened.

Sketch: If memory serves, your first job was on an issue of G.I. Joe?

Ron: Right. That was a real bear. [General laughter.]

Sketch: Why was that?

Ron: Just the referencing, especially for my first comic book job. It was like, "What the hell have I got myself into?" Because every single toy, right down to the nut and bolt, had to be pretty exact because Marvel had a licensing agreement with Mattel, or Hasbro, or whoever had the rights to the G.I. Joe toys back then. So it was like you had to make sure you put in all the vehicles and all the characters, and every little thing had to be pretty close [to spec]. It was just, for a first comic job, trying to do it and get it done in a few weeks - and, you know, in comics every job needs to be done yesterday - that was just like kind of like an overdrive learning experience for me. But I did it. I was staying up, pulling all-nighters, just to get the job done.

Sketch: And I suppose you had to use a lot of reference for that one, too.

Ron: Yeah. Like I said, they were sending me all kinds of action figures and vehicles. And I had picture books, and military books, and things like that that I was relying quite heavily on for that job. And then, when I got to *Moon Knight*, I didn't need any of that as much, so it was a little bit nicer.

Sketch: Do you have to use reference material of any kind at this point?

Ron: Sometimes. A lot of times, after doing it for, oh, God, it's almost thirteen years now, you kind of have your own file book in your head of things that you draw that you can sort of rely on, anyways. So I don't have to rely on photo reference as much, but I still do occasionally. I find that, a lot of times, it takes the charm out of the work when you get too reference-heavy. Unless you're a guy like Alex Ross whose whole technique is pretty dependent on realism, you know? Or a guy like Rudolfo Damaggio. I think there was a period where

because if you let it go to waste, you just never know what your potential could have been. And if you find that you try a lot of other things in your life, and yet you're still able to do that one thing better than a lot of people - no, it's not so much about other people, but just better than some of the other things in your life; you should really keep exploring that, and not resent it.

Sketch: How did you prepare yourself to break into comics?

Ron: Well, once I became interested, I remember that I tried that try-out [book from] Marvel. Obviously I didn't win that, I think Mark Bagley did. But that's pretty much where it started. I walked into that same shop where I was buying comics and I saw it on the shelf. At that time I was kind of inquisitive as to how to break into something like that, and then I saw this try-out book and I was like, "Holy crap!" I think, actually, the guy behind the counter told me [about it]. I asked him how people break into comics, and he actually pointed out the try-out book. And so I brought it home, and started

doing it, and I think I made it just by the deadline. [General laughter] But I didn't win. They probably got thousands of submissions, who knows, but I just remember feeling challenged.

As I said before, when I was in high school or grammar school there wasn't much of a challenge, because nobody did what I did. And then to go from college, where I had a lot of people like me [around] who were as good as I was [at art]. And then to the try-out book, where I didn't win that, it was just sort of a challenge to make me say, "Wait a minute. I'm not as good as I think I am." And so I turned around and I started focusing on getting better at drawing. I would go to the tops of buildings. I started drawing buildings and cars, and started drawing more and more and more. Whereas before I was just taking it for granted and I would just draw when I felt like it, now I was drawing, I was bringing a pad with me for the specific purpose of going to a restaurant and drawing faces, or things like that.

So that's pretty much how I started preparing myself. It was more of a challenge, where I thought to myself, "Well, I'm not going to stop until I get in

I really got on a Rudolfo Damaggio kick, because the stuff was so perfectly drawn, and well referenced. And none of it seemed ... you know, when you look at Rudolfo Damaggio's work, none of it seems referenced, it didn't seem like it was referenced, it just seemed like it all integrated very well. Whereas when I put in reference in my work, at times I think it looks like, "Oh, gosh, that looks too real for the rest of the panel." Whereas a guy like Rudolfo, his work was just based a lot on that realism, so it never seemed ostentatious or out of place.

When I started to get on that kick I had a certain charm to my work - like my work on *Captain America*, for instance, had a certain cartooniness in spots - that whenever I started referencing things, especially my second time around, when I came back to the book, I was really on that kick, that realistic kick, I don't know if it blended quite as well. It may have started to blend okay, but I think some of the charm got lost in my work. I think I became too realistic in spots, whereas before I was relying on my own personality to get the drawing through, rather than anything realistic. So my personality was not as much a part of the face, or the environment; it lost some of what made it unique. And that's the danger. When you start going down that road and you start referencing, and you start doing that, a lot of your personality, and a lot of what makes your work unique, gets lost.

Sketch: What was the working method on that book, and who was writing it then?

Ron: It was Marc DeMatteis, and that was interesting, because it was all ethereal. There wasn't a lot to draw, to be honest with you. [General laughter] They were neat stories, very spiritual, and a lot of spiritual connection between Scarlet and Moon Knight. So that was interesting. It was all about the romantic, kind of spiritual connection [between the two characters]. There was a lot of mist. That's an artist's dream; if you want to make your deadline, all you got to do is draw a lot of mist. [General laughter.]

And Marc did it full script. So it was panel for panel, because he had a real defined way that he wanted the tempo to go, and zooming in camera shots. He was real big on wanting to do that, the cinematography of it. So he had it laid out very carefully, how he wanted the story to unfold. So it was pretty easy. I just sat there and drew a lot of mist, and figures coming out of mists, and a lot of the panels were repetitive. Like the previous panel had the exact same shot, except there might be one variation in a figure in it. So you were just copying yourself. And so I could go through the book quickly. Back then I was doing three pages a day. Just going through them because they were so simple.

As I got better, though, as I kept improving and the more knowledge I started amassing about drawing and how to tell stories and things like that, I started slowing down. That's what happens, too; the better you get, the more you slow down, because you start having to apply all this knowledge you've learned that you didn't know before. Whereas before, it was like you didn't know certain things so there was a level of acceptance to the level you'd reached at one point in the work, and you just let it go because you didn't know any better. Whereas now, [once you've gained that knowledge,] you look at it and go, "Well, that's not right." So you flip it over, and you work it, and you work it, and more time goes by. That's why a guy like Adam Hughes takes so long, because of how much he knows. And he's not willing to let that drawing go because it's

Rough Page Layouts from UNCANNY X-MEN #410 by Ron Garney.

just not right to him. And so he sacrifices the time, and the paycheck, for the art.

Sketch: Do you like working from a full script, or do you like to have more input into the story?

Ron: I'm generally one of the few guys who doesn't like full script as much. I read an interview with a writer where he brought my name up for that reason. Basically they asked him were any artists who didn't like working full script, or complained about it. He said, "Well, Ron Garney complained about it, actually." And then he kind of went into a couple paragraphs of what he thought the writer's job was versus the artist's, and that it's not a pissing contest, and [how] it's not the artist's job to create tempo and pacing and this and that. And I have to totally disagree with that. That's just not true. I mean, tell that to Will Eisner.

Of course, from my point of view it's the job of the penciler to create pacing. But I always find it interesting when I hear a writer say, "Oh, the penciler did it exactly the way I envisioned it." Well, that's

just impossible, first of all. But the point is that if every artist besides me likes it that way, that's absolutely fine for them. I'm not saying it's the right way or wrong way to work together. All I'm saying is that for me, most of the enjoyment I get out of doing comic book work is not creating flash and style in the work, it's about telling the story. And so for me, when a writer does full script, he's taking away part of what I enjoy most about doing comic books.

Whereas some artists probably don't care. Because they just want to draw, or they want draw like ... I don't know, like Joe Mad [Madureira], manga style stuff. Joe is a good storyteller as well, but looking at the work he seems to have more fun stylistically. That's not what interests me personally as much. What interests me is, "Hmm, how can I tell this story and create a musical flow to the story?" and, "Where are the points of impact where I can put in a big panel that'll make everything that builds up to it seem like it was worth something?" Do you follow what I'm saying?

Rough Cover Design for HULK by Ron Garney.

Sketch: *Yeah. It's that sense of building tension leading up to some kind of a release that makes a really good piece of music, whether it's a symphony or rock song, work.*

Ron: Exactly. It's not about the sound of the guitar, but what the notes do. And that's what comic book work is to me. So when a guy wants to do full scripts, great, that's fine, okay. I don't enjoy it as much. And that's all I've ever tried to explain to any writer. And I've tried to always come to a compromise somewhere in the middle of it and say, "Look, can you do a couple of full scripts, and then give me a plot to have fun with every third issue?" I don't think that's too much to ask, and I think a lot of writers need to lighten up about having such control over pacing. I understand some of them. But when you're with such a seasoned pro as myself, who's proven to work on plots and to make them, sometimes, better than they what they were - and that may sound arrogant, but it's just true - I think you need to lighten up a little bit. I'm not unwilling to

do full scripts; I just don't enjoy doing them as much.

Sketch: *Well, part of it is, too, comics are - unless you're someone like Eisner, who does it all - it's obviously a process that involves developing and sustaining a synergy between the writer and artist.*

Ron: Right, and I had that synergy with Mark Waid when we were working on *Captain America.* That was some of my most fun work, because I was getting to do all of that by myself. It was up to me to do the pacing, and how to tell the story, and Mark never suffered for any of it. Not that I know of, unless he's complained to somebody else that I don't know about. [General laughter] As far as I know he was pretty happy with what I came up with. And *Cap* was the perfect book to do that because it needs to be action-oriented, a lot of it. You just need to know how to make the story move. And that's why I had so much fun with it, because

I got to choose exactly how many panels to get the story across. And as long as everything in his story, that was in his plot, was in there, then I was able to have fun with everything else. That, to me, is what it's about. And it's their story, I understand that, but it's also ... the story's one thing; to create it visually is a totally different thing.

Sketch: *Did you often feel the need to change some of the pacing in the full scripts?*

Ron: Not generally. I try not to do that. I mean, full scripts are very hard to do that with. These guys have it in their heads: these are the words that are being spoken, and this is what happens. There are times when I'll insert a panel here or there. I never change anything, but I might need to put in a little inset of a headshot. You know, I'll take a piece of the dialogue and make it an inserted headshot and a panel itself, rather than it being part of the panel they wanted it in because it just doesn't work visually or within the context of that panel. So sometimes...but most of the time it's pretty straightforward stuff. That's the way they want it, so I just do it.

That said, I always try to get what I can out of it and ask these guys to give me plot every few issues. And that's how it worked with Paul [Jenkins, writer]. And, when I was on *Hulk* and Paul gave me a plot, I had the most fun on it. I got to do the things I wanted to do. I think our first plot [issue] together was *Hulk* #16 or #17, and it was one of the more artistically pleasing issues for me, I think. Even Paul admitted to it down the road.

Sketch: *What lead you to leave* Moon Knight?

Ron: I was offered to do this book called *Nightstalkers,* which was part of this big promotion at Marvel called "Midnight Sons." It was a huge push to bring in a whole new line of books. And it was a good opportunity to kind of play *Super Mario Brothers* with my career, and jump to the next level and get an extra 100 points. That's sort of the way I look at careers. [General laughter] That's sort of what life is; you just keep trying to jump to the next level. Sometimes you miss, sometimes you hit. But that was pretty much the motivating reason. I was going to do both [originally]. I was going to do *Moon Knight* and *Nightstalkers.* I didn't want to leave *Moon Knight,* because a lot of the storyline coming up in *Moon Knight* was based on some of my ideas.

But there was this other opportunity there that I really couldn't pass up, and it was the chance to be on something a little more high profile at the time. And it was worth it, especially monetarily. The thing did so well; it did, finally, put me in an area where I was comfortable financially for the first time in my life. So it was a good move.

**Sketch:** *Was that satisfying, artistically speaking?*

Ron: Well, yes and no. Obviously it was, because I was psyched to draw something new, but it really wasn't the genre I was looking to do when I got into comics, to be perfectly honest. I just knew that if I wanted to eventually do what I wanted to do, you know, sometimes you have to sling mud. [General laughter] Maybe that's not a nice way to put it. Sometimes you have to do things that probably aren't mostly what you want to do. Somebody else might have loved doing that kind of work. That wasn't my favorite kind of thing to do, since it was supernatural horror. Which it wasn't even horror, [as much as] it was grotesque. Dan Chichester is a great
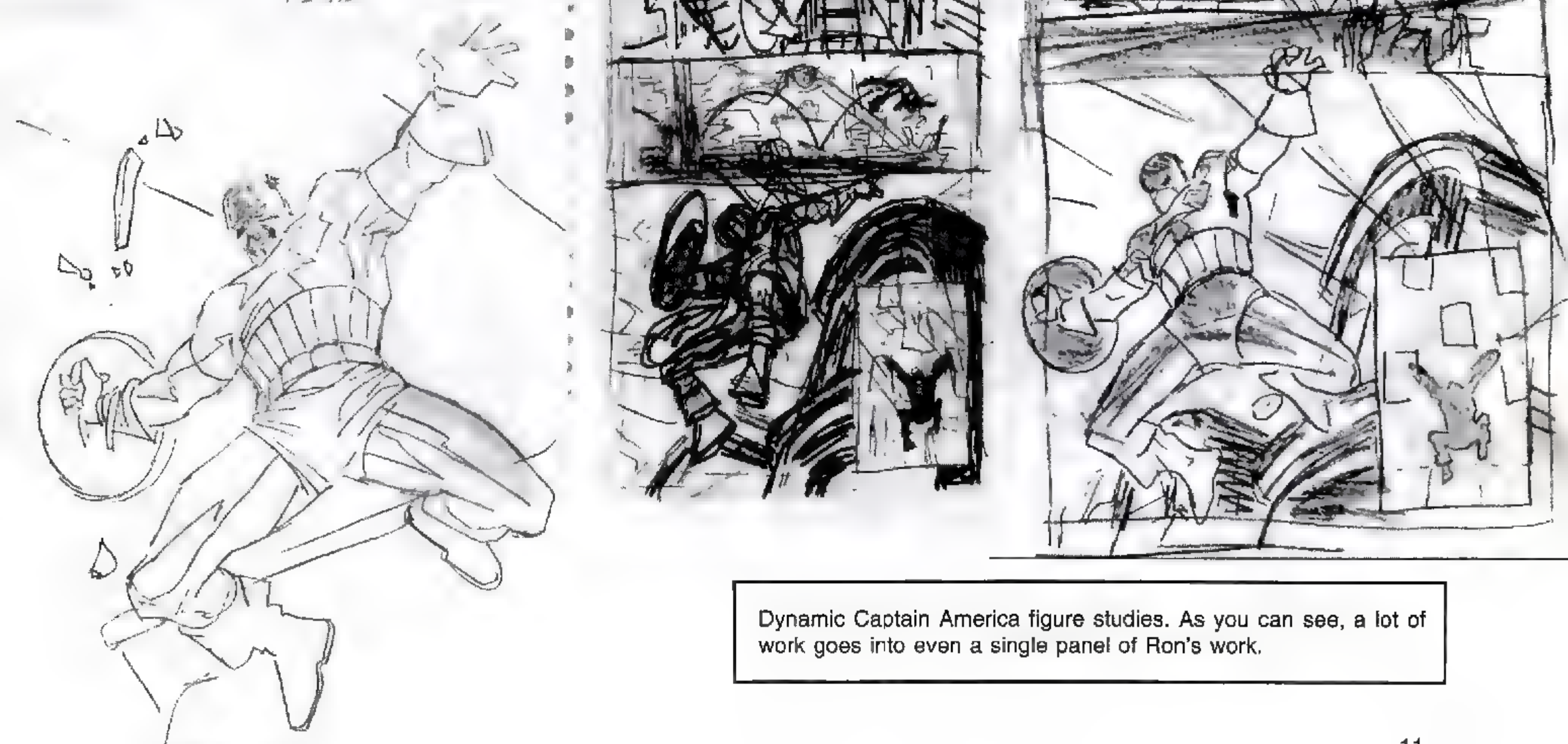
CAPTAIN AMERICA
"THE EXPLOSION"

ROUGHS
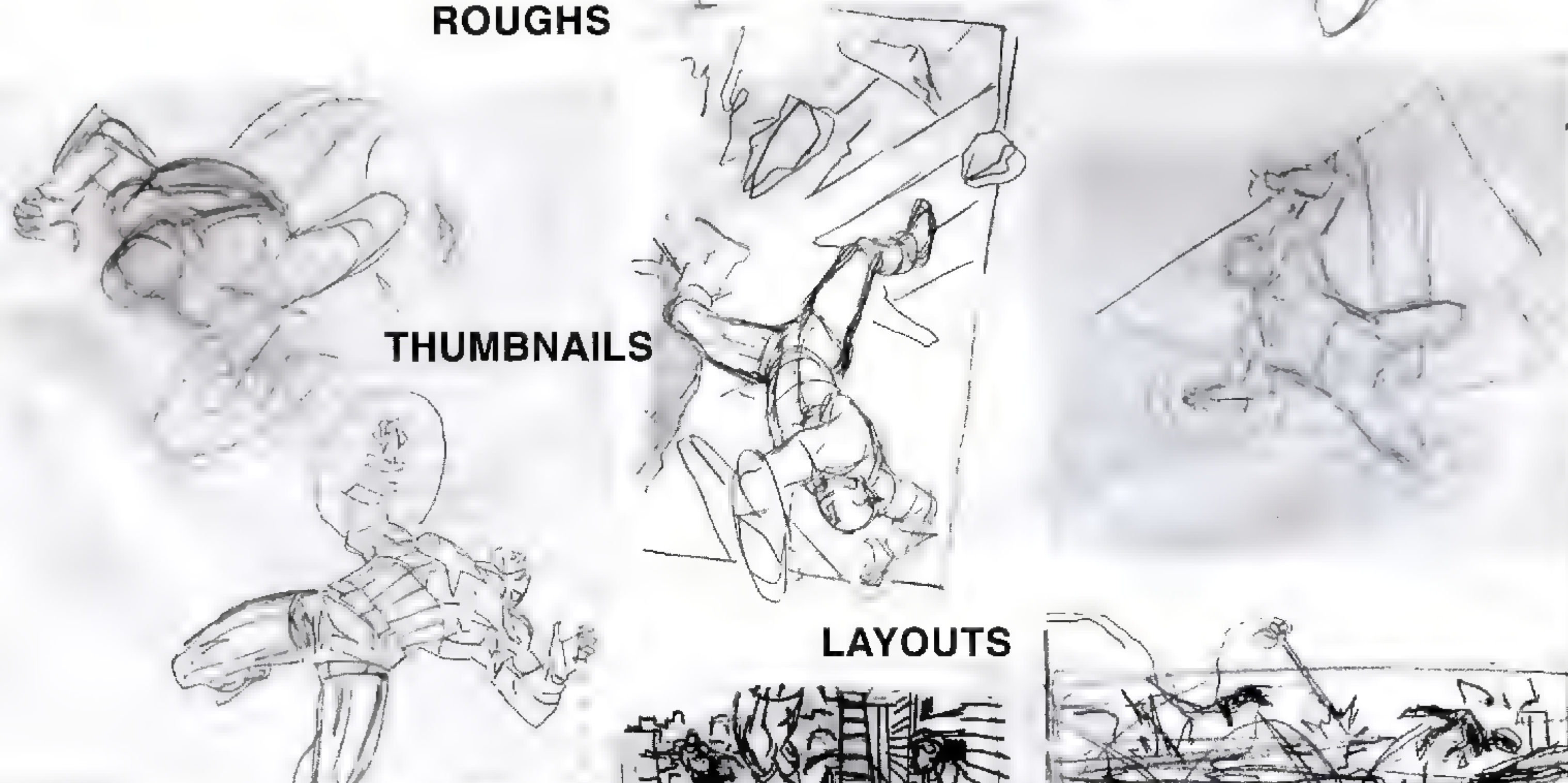
THUMBNAILS

LAYOUTS

Dynamic Captain America figure studies. As you can see, a lot of work goes into even a single panel of Ron's work.

writer, and he's very influenced by Clive Barker-type material. And that's cool. Whatever. To each his own, and that's fine if that's what you're into.

It's just that for me, that's not what I got into comics for. I'm more about Captain America and Superman. And at that time I wasn't getting those offers as much as it was I kept getting supernatural offers - like after *Nightstalkers* I got offered *Ghost Rider*. But it was always one little step towards the mainstream superhero stuff.

So I was doing that at the time, and I was just sort of using it until I could find the [right] opportunity, and that opportunity came after *Ghost Rider* when I got to do *Cap*. And that's where I was like, "Yes!" I was finally getting to do the kind of heroes that I wanted. So, that's how it happened.

Sketch: Well, Ghost Rider was closer to the superhero stuff you really wanted to do, wasn't it?

Ron: Yeah. Well, a lot of superheroes were appearing with Ghost Rider. I think the *Fear, Captain America and Ghost Rider* book came out at that time. So that's an unusual pairing, but that's Marvel trying to strike while the iron is hot and team Ghost Rider - who was a very hot character at the time - up with an old mainstream character like Cap, which was just interesting. People would want to read it, you know? But, yeah, Ghost Rider was a little more mainstream then, because he was more popular. But he was still not Superman or anything like that. A lot of good artists had been on it before me. I think the Kubert brothers had done it before me, or Andy Kubert had done it. Bret Blevins, I went on right after him. He was a tough act to follow. But I had a lot of fun. I did the follow up to a book with Ghost Rider, Punisher, and Wolverine that John Romita, Jr. had done. I did the second one of that [series]. It was called *The Dark Design* and I had a lot of fun on. It was all about the art, on that.

Sketch: After that you got offered Captain America. *How'd that come about?*

Ron: I was supposed to take a vacation, and Bobby Chase called me up and asked me to do *Dark Design*. It was during that time that I think I ended up in a conversation with Ralph Macchio, or he called me, and he originally offered me *The Avengers* I think. Or maybe it was *Thor*. Well, it was one of those books. But that was what he had in mind for me, and then when he said *Captain America*, I said, "Well, I'll do Cap!" [General laughter.]

And I was really excited when he basically explained to me where they wanted to go with the book. They wanted to give Cap a real, definable face. And I'm like, "Look, I know exactly what I would do with that character." And that's part of the reason that I think it was successful, too, because it was just shorthand for me, because I knew just exactly how, in my head, he should look and feel. So when he offered it to me, I just knew right away [it was right].

Sketch: It seemed like you began stripping it all down to essentials, simplifying your art, on Captain America.

Ron: Yeah, I know what you mean. I think it was more something clicked. I mean, as you're growing as an artist, things start to happen. You start catching on to certain things more than you normally would. And I think with that, with my art, I just became very aware of the organization within the panels, the artistic organization, and I started working more philosophically about shapes and solid blacks. I started thinking in terms of flocks of birds, or how everything alike is grouped together in nature to sort of organize themselves. I think my art was much more chaotic before I got on Cap.

And as I was growing as an artist, I started thinking more naturally and philosophically, and I started organizing certain elements to have a combination of a certain randomness along with order that you see in nature. You know, like a flock of birds formed in the "V" formation; everything sort of groups itself together. And I started doing that with solid blacks. Sort of organizing solid blacks to form more simplistic shapes. And I started organizing negative space. And if there was a group of people, I would tend to start organizing people in groups of threes. You know... there are three people here, there are three people over there, rather than just have six people randomly wherever in a group scene in a panel. In a crowd scene, or something. You just start finding little things that work, visually, that create an artistic kind of integrity in the panel. I think that's what started happening with Cap. I started figuring out ways to simplify and organize it better than I had before.

Sketch: But at the same time, the dynamics were really pumped up.

Ron: Yeah, and I've had a lot of good comments about that. And I've got to say I don't know where that came from. I mean the dynamics just happened. You know, sometimes you just don't know why [it works so well]. Maybe you're just that enthused or something about a project.

But something about it just clicked; I just knew how to do it. And I think a lot of it was because I'm a musician. I really have a good sense of timing and rhythm. I think, anyways maybe I'm sounding like I'm patting myself on the back here, I don't mean to - but I just feel like that influenced a lot of what was going on in Cap. I was making very deliberate attempts at pacing each panel; if you read it without words, you would feel music, almost. I know this sounds kind of corny, but real tempo. And lengths of panels, even I was using lengths of panels to create tempo, and rhythm. I was really just on overdrive, trying to work in a philosophy that I had come up with that I thought could really work. And in some ways it did, quite a bit. I mean it was really successful. In other ways, not so much, sometimes. But I was never as much about the focus of the style of the art as I was that, even though I had become more stylistically unique at that time.

Sketch: Why don't we talk about how you create your art. Once you got the script from Mark, which was basically a plot, what would you do at that point? Would you read through the whole thing before putting pencil to paper, or did you do any rough panels or thumbnails during your read through?

Ron: I would always start with thumbnails, no question about that. That was the other thing that changed, actually - right around that time I didn't used to do as many thumbnails before Cap I started out doing thumbnails, but I started sacrificing the thumbnails for speed. And, believe it or not, you'd think doing thumbnails would make you faster. I wasn't working from that approach at that time, early on in my career. I was doing bond paper roughs, full size, the way John Buscema used to do them. I would take a piece of copy paper, lay it over the comic book page, and scribble in the page really fast, and then just trace over it.

But what I was having problems with; my
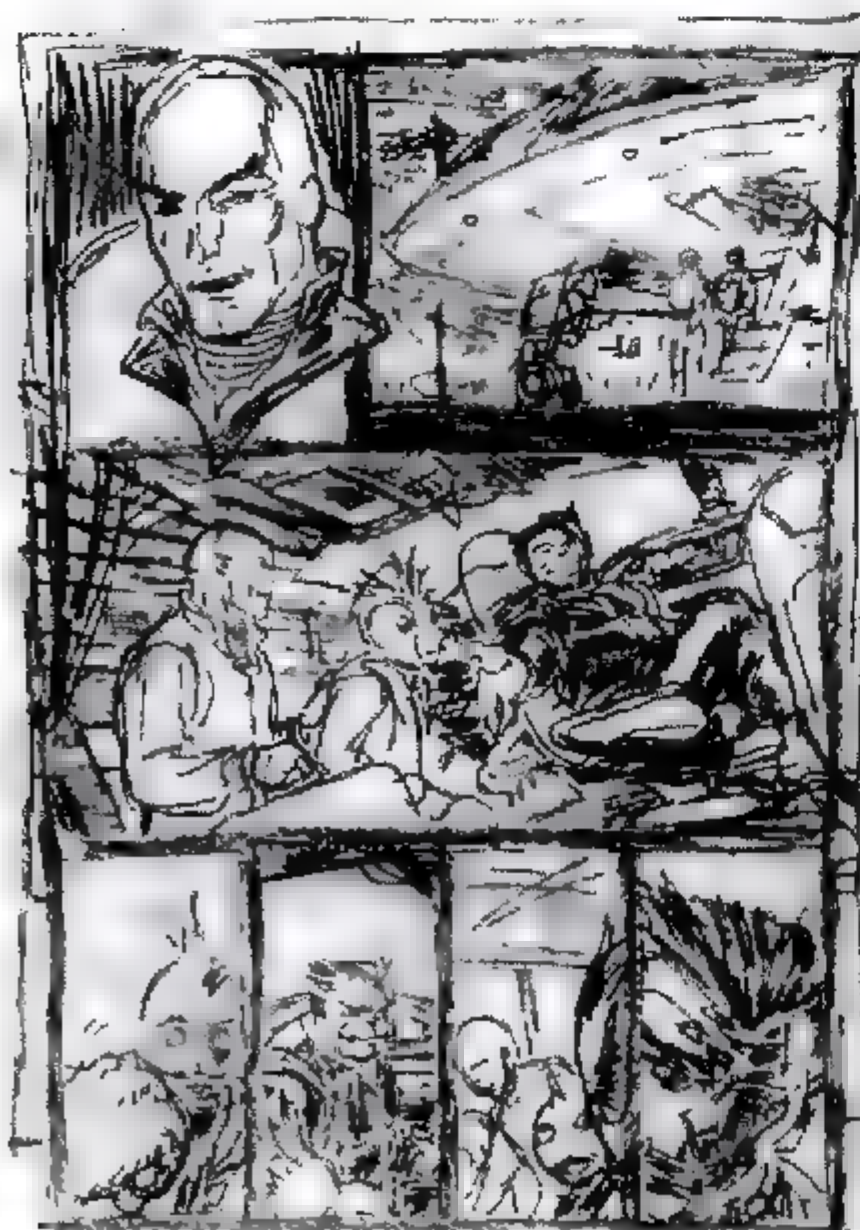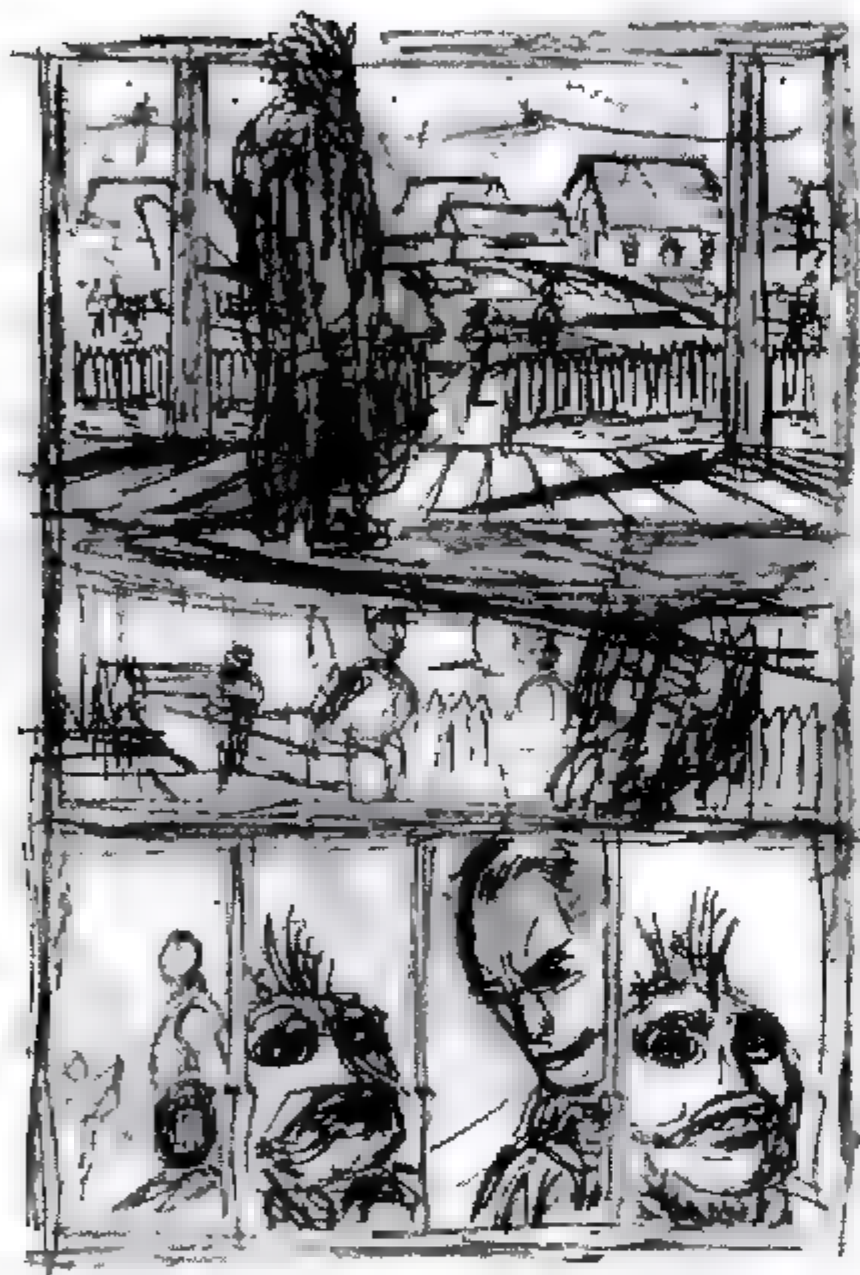
compositional skills weren't really that developed [then], so I was having a really tough time, compositionally, with the arrangements of the panels, the size of the panels, the whole direction there with that [aspect of drawing]. So I started doing them smaller again, and that's really where a lot of my organizational skills started getting better, since I was able to see the entire page much easier than [when] I was just doing full size bond roughs.

Sketch: The design aspect of whole the page suddenly hits you.

Ron: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. When you're doing it full size, you are just too close to see, it's too big for you to see everything you need to see in the composition for it to work, [or] sometimes, the way it needs to work. And the size relationships and the proportion, all that comes into play.

Sketch: How detailed are your thumbnails?

Ron: Depends on how late I am. [General laughter] If I need to get an issue done in a week, I can do it. Because what I do is I do very small, very tight thumbnails. And I just keep working, working on three pages a day. Then I trace them right off onto the board, and I don't go crazy with lot of filling in the blacks and making it super, super tight. As long as the pencil line is there enough to see what's there, then I can do it that way. It's just that it's never my best work. But what tends to dictate how detailed my thumbnails are is how much time I have.

Most of the time I do a very loose thumbnail - basically how I want it, where the shapes are going to go for the composition. Then I blow it up and start working right onto the page from that very basic composition. A lot of times when I'm really strapped for time I sit and do all that leg work that I normally do on the full page, I'll do it on a thumbnail. But it's never quite as dynamic, or as fun, or as naturally drawn as tracing off of a very tight thumbnail.

Sketch: So you actually trace your thumbnails right onto the full board?

Ron: Yeah. I'll blow it up with a copy machine. I used to use an artograph, which is a big projector. You tack in the thumbnail and you blow it up. You can enlarge it and reduce it, and you can move it around. But I found the copy machine and a light table works best for me, because I can get the thumbnails on the page easier. It's just a matter of popping it into the copier, blowing it up, and tracing it. With the artograph you've got to tack it in, you've got to adjust the size, and then keep adjusting the size of the panels because the proportions don't look quite right. It's a different animal, really.

Sketch: What kind of pencils are you using? And what kind of tip do you like, and does that vary during the process of moving from thumbnails to the full page?

Ron: I always start with just a regular #2 pencil. I was experimenting a lot with sandpaper instead of a regular pencil sharpener, and graphite and things like that. And then what I always move up to for the final tightened work is a #3 lead pointer. But I usually start just by working off the softer lead, and get all the shapes in on the paper. That can be just a plain old #2 pencil.

There's a time when I used #2Bs, and a lead pointer, where it's a real soft lead. You just lay it in and the pencil just glides over the paper really well. And a lot of it, too, depends on the tooth of the paper. Marvel has pretty good paper now. They used

to have real nice gloss finish bristol board. Now it's more kid finished and it's a little rougher, the tooth is rougher, so you sometimes have to start with a softer pencil so you can get all the [line] you can. For me, when you have that rougher finish on the board, if you have to dig into the paper with a lead to get a tight line it really slows me down. So I'll have to use a softer lead to adjust to the finish on the board.

But that's generally how I do it now. Soft lead at the beginning, and then just work off of that, and increase up to a 3H to get all the tight lines.

Sketch: It sounds like you prefer a smoother tooth, then.

Ron: Yeah, I like plate finish bristol. That kind of paper just works better for me. The pencil glides over it, it's easier to get a tighter line. You don't waste time erasing as much. A lot of times when you're penciling you have it in your head to get a line a certain way, and then, because the tooth is rough on the paper, the pencil catches that tooth and your pencil veers off the direction you wanted it to go. So you have to erase, and go back over and get back into that direction. And sometimes, believe it or not, something like that can really slow you down because over every panel you're constantly erasing things.

Sketch: Yeah, and I'd imagine it can get really messy too, which can be a problem.

Ron: Yeah, that and it starts to smudge. A lot of times I've gone - and I still do this - I've gone and penciled almost entire pages, but they're so messy and I can't seem to get the right tightness to the line that I go right over it with another piece of bristol board, and trace over what I just did. Because then it just becomes easier to see the lines, and you're not erasing, and your pencil's not falling into the grooves of the lines you've already erased. So, whatever's easiest.

Sketch: Is there a particular eraser that you use, or doesn't that seem to matter as much to you?

Ron: I always use a Staedler-Mars. I don't use a kneaded eraser because those start to gum up after a while, and they start to stick to the board and you get little blotches of lead everywhere. So I just use one of those Staedler-Mars erasers that decompose when you erase, it just breaks into little pieces that you just wipe away.

Sketch: What about inks? It seems like you don't typically ink yourself these days.

Ron: Yeah, I have, [but] not typically, you're right. What about it?

Sketch: When you do ink, what kind of tools do you use?

Ron: Oh, the basics. The same things that everybody uses. I'm sure if people have read any one of your *Sketch* magazine [interviews with] these artists, they'll all tell you the same thing.

I've used a lot of different things and techniques. I was inking all of my *Captain America* covers. First one on that [run] I used a toothbrush to get a nice scratchy effect in the sky, with a solid black in there. I tend to use pens or rapidographs, or a lot of times I like using a brush. I use a Winsor & Newton series 7. With a brand new brush, you get some real nice control. The problem with these things now is they just decay so fast that, after a few uses, they're no good. Even if you use the soap, the brush cleaner and preserver, they still tend to just
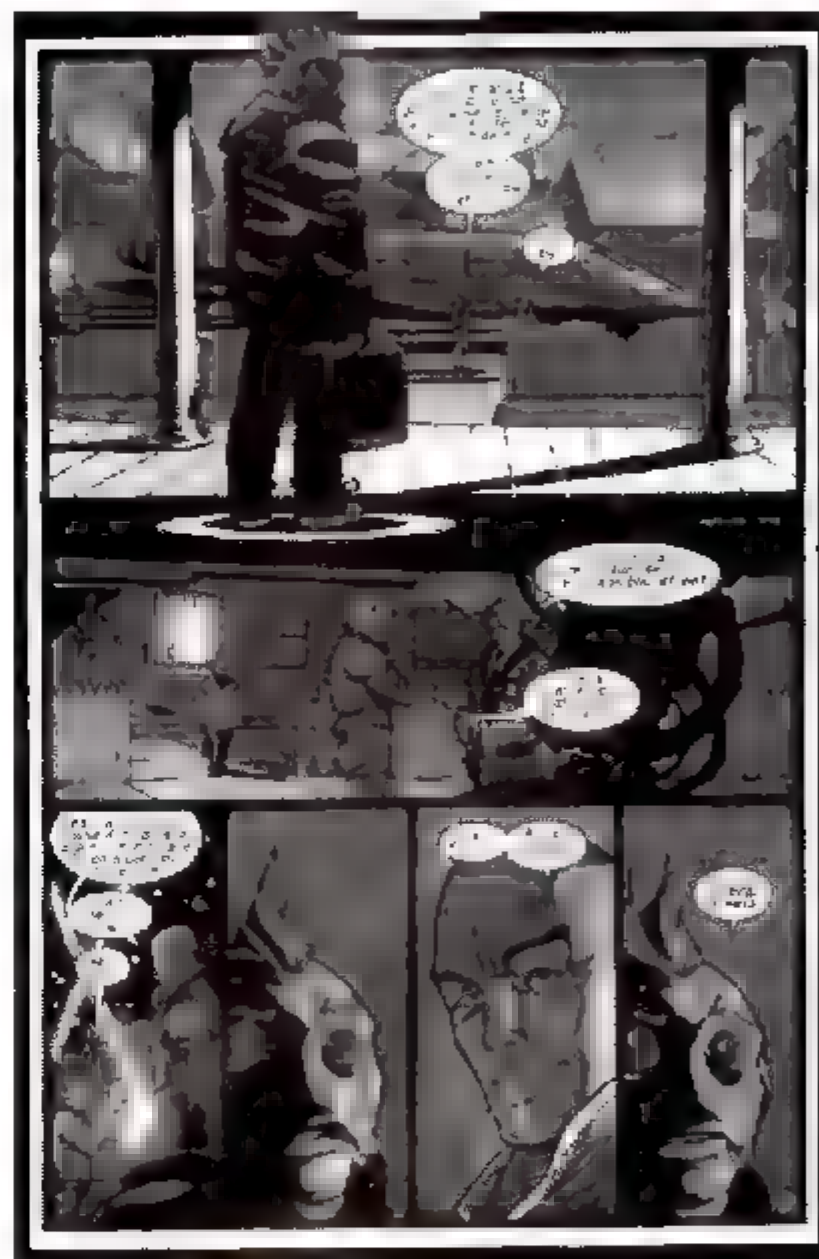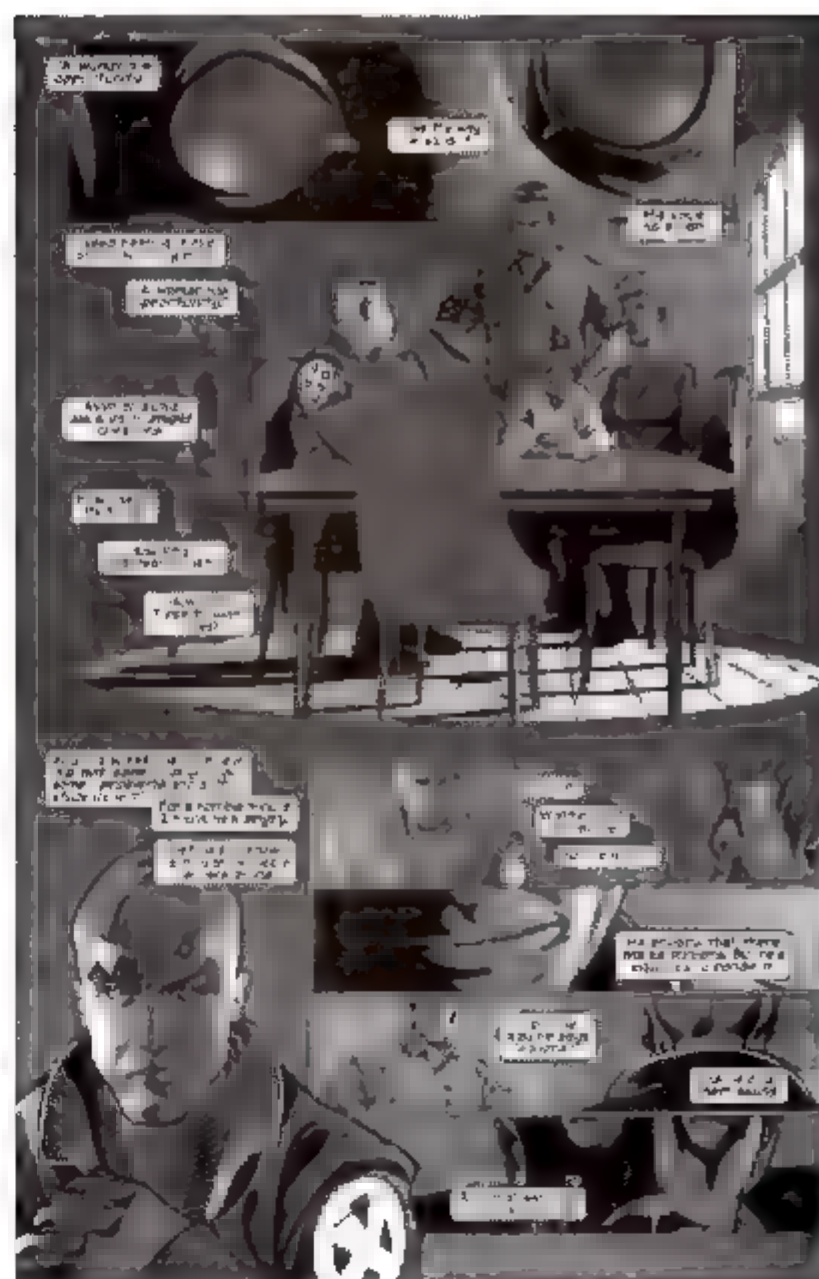
Finished Pages from UNCANNY X-MEN #410

13

CAPTAIN AMER CA rough by Ron

dull The tip of each bristle gets duller and duller until you really can't get control with the brush anymore, so you have to go out and buy a new one.

Sketch: *How were you using the toothbrush?*

Ron: I would just dip it I would lay a little bit of ink on a piece of paper, very light - and then just take the toothbrush and graze over it, to get as much ink on each separate bristle. And then just go over and start scratching it [on the paper], like a sky technique. And then you take a little bit of the toothbrush with your thumb and you pull the bristles back and you spray a little bit. And it gives a nice, kind of rough effect to it Bill Sienkiewicz probably does that, I would think. I don't know if he does, but that's something that I'd imagine that he'd do.

Sketch: *If you had your druthers, would you be inking yourself most of the time?*

Ron: Yeah, probably. I mean, it's like anything. Would Gary Larson be Gary Larson if he didn't ink himself? The problem is that, comic book work; you just don't have the time. It's not like you're doing one little drawing every week. You're doing twenty-two pages a month, and you're trying to tell a story. So it's just not conducive to doing both, unless you're really fast, or unless you are really adept at drawing with the ink. And I don't do it enough where I'm really comfortable right away, right from the starting gate every time I start to ink, to be able to do that. After a time I get to that point, but it takes a while. It takes years of constantly inking your own work to get used to it.

Inking is a tough thing. A lot of people think it's easy; "It's tracing'" It's not, really. A lot happens when that ink goes down onto that board. But the problem with it is that once that ink goes down onto that board, it's up to the inker and his personality, and his personal view, to get it right. And so that's where you end up having either a clash of styles or a nice combination. Certain guys are good enough that they look good on most people, because their styles and their techniques are strong enough that it's always a good job. Like Klaus Janson, for instance. But you get a lot of younger

guys who are just trying to rely on technical things. Like third generation Scott Williams things were going on for a long time, and you get, really, something that just massacres the personality of the pencils. And that's the real tough part.

And 'hat's why I think, no matter what, t's always best when a penciler, or an artist, inks his own work, because then it's just his own personality - no matter what. And only that person is going to know every line that he put down, and what each curve of each pencil line means. Whereas another inker, he has to rely on his own personality, his interpretation of what those lines mean. So you never really get [something that's] totally you. You get some guys that are really close to what you've done.

Like, Bob Wiacek is good for that. He tends to ink fairly close to what you put down on the board. But then there's other guys like Sal Buscema I worked with, whose technique is really, really cool. He just has this really cool technique. When it looked more like my work, I thought it was awesome. I just loved it. But then there were moments where it would veer off into Sal, where it started to look like Sal Buscema, and that's where everything changes. That's not your personality anymore, and that's not your penciling That's him penciling over you with his inks And so that's always the drawback [of someone else inking you]

Sketch: *Since you are so aware of how colors effect your work, what do you look for in a colorist?*

Ron: Subtle values. I think it's easy to get caught up in trying to go crazy with the coloring, but I think it would be better to restrain oneself from the temptation of trying to do to much with it because it's [computer coloring] available. Not everybody does it but I've seen it happen. But that's what it seems like. I think some guys are having fun with trying to put in effects, and trying to experiment with it.

But I've noticed also that it's hard to really experiment successfully with something like that, unless you've reached a level of proficiency or drafts-

manship as an artist to experiment well with it and get really good results I'm not saying it could never happen, but it's always better to start by learning basic soft light and shade and value first before diving into using all kinds of effects gratuitously. I've seen that happen as well. A colorist can get the work because that space needs to be filled, but if someone gets it who's not quite as proficient as the penciler or the inker it can really bring the work down. The same goes for an inker who's not quite as proficient a draftsman as the penciler; he'll have a harder time translating the pencil to ink successfully.

With some colorists, maybe it's the same thing. If you tend not to understand light sources, and start casting shadows with computer coloring in spaces where it's supposed to be the opposite. If you cast a shadow where it's supposed to be light, or if you're modeling noses on the other side where there's a light source, where there's no shadow there, it all ends up looking very clumsy. There've been times when I've seen that done. I've seen a lot who are really good at doing that though, at doing the modeling or choosing the light sources.

You also have to think in terms of depth. You can throw something in red for emotional effect, but then you have to consider there's blue in the foreground, and then what you have is a flattened-out panel because the warm color jumps ahead of the cool color. So you get this garish kind of look to a panel and it's very ugly, and you have to consider that, even though you may be really good at modeling and understanding the light sources I guess it's about understanding the values of the colors.

Some of the best colorists are the guys that, again, don't reveal themselves. They kind of are just there, and it's a very subtle thing that you don't notice. Matt Hollingsworth is a good example. I think he's really, really good. Everything's very subtle, and he doesn't get into a lot of overstating with the color. There's emotional impact, even when he uses a yellow. It's not a garish yellow that stabs your eyes when you look at it; it's a subdued value that's really interesting.

Sketch: He's a great example of a colorist whose work isn't just serving the art, but the storytelling as well. He's got an uncanny ability to serve both the art and the story simultaneously.

Ron: No doubt. That's absolutely true. You know, on a monthly gig it's easy to stop caring about it as much for the sake of the schedule because it's a monthly gig. It's easy to get into the trap of thinking, "Ah, it's just another comic book." That's why you see some of the really proficient guys doing mostly special projects, because it's more about the fun of creating the art and evolving, and it's not an experiment on monthly business.

Sketch: How do you create the art for your covers? Do you follow the same basic procedure as you would drawing a page?

Ron: The same way a page works, pretty much. You always start with an idea. You look through the plot and you try to find something that may trigger something - you know, a high point in the story that may trigger an image. Or, sometimes when that's too difficult, you can rely on some old favorites. Close-ups and faces always tend to work. But I tend to try to find a story element that may work, or what have you.

With *Captain America*, it was very symbolic on some covers, some of it was action oriented. But I had a very thematic approach to my covers on *Captain America* in that I would always have kind of a graphic, black bar across the top and the bottom of the comic cover, or have some kind of graphic shape to frame Cap. Or just try little different tricks, or use symbolism, or things like that. I think on a couple of Cap covers, [for] one I used the American flag and his costume, and another one I used Cap's shield sitting on a stair, and one was him running out at the reader with the skyline of London behind him, or a close up of the shield. You know, just more symbolic. Sometimes those tend to work better, without necessarily having to reveal much of the story. I think, sometimes, those are more interesting covers, because it's more indicative of the character. Captain America was better because he's more about the ideals he represents, rather than just the action of what's going on the page, you know? And if you can pull that off, pull off the heroic ideal and symbolism of Captain America on a cover that has action on it, that's all the better. But I tended to find that it worked best on Cap when I just relied on the symbolic imagery to get the feeling across of the hero it represented.

On *The Hulk*, too, it was very similar. My first Hulk cover was him smashing through a town and grabbing Bruce Banner. That's always about the character. The story was told on the cover, but it wasn't any particular point of action. So each cover is something different. But, more or less, Marvel tends to choose the covers I design which tend to be more of that theme, rather than [those which reveal] a whole lot of what's going on inside the book. I tend to give them three or four rough designs, roughs that they chose from.

Sketch: Are you doing about a page a day?

Ron: Yeah, but I don't work that way. I tend to have to go back to the pages because I don't spot everything that needs to be done on the page right away. Because you're so close to it, what happens is if I work straight through a page and put it aside, eventually I'll go back and I look and I go, "Oh my God, that's so wrong!" I'll find all these mistakes on it, and I don't want to go the full distance and the aggravation of full penciling unless I can catch those mistakes first.
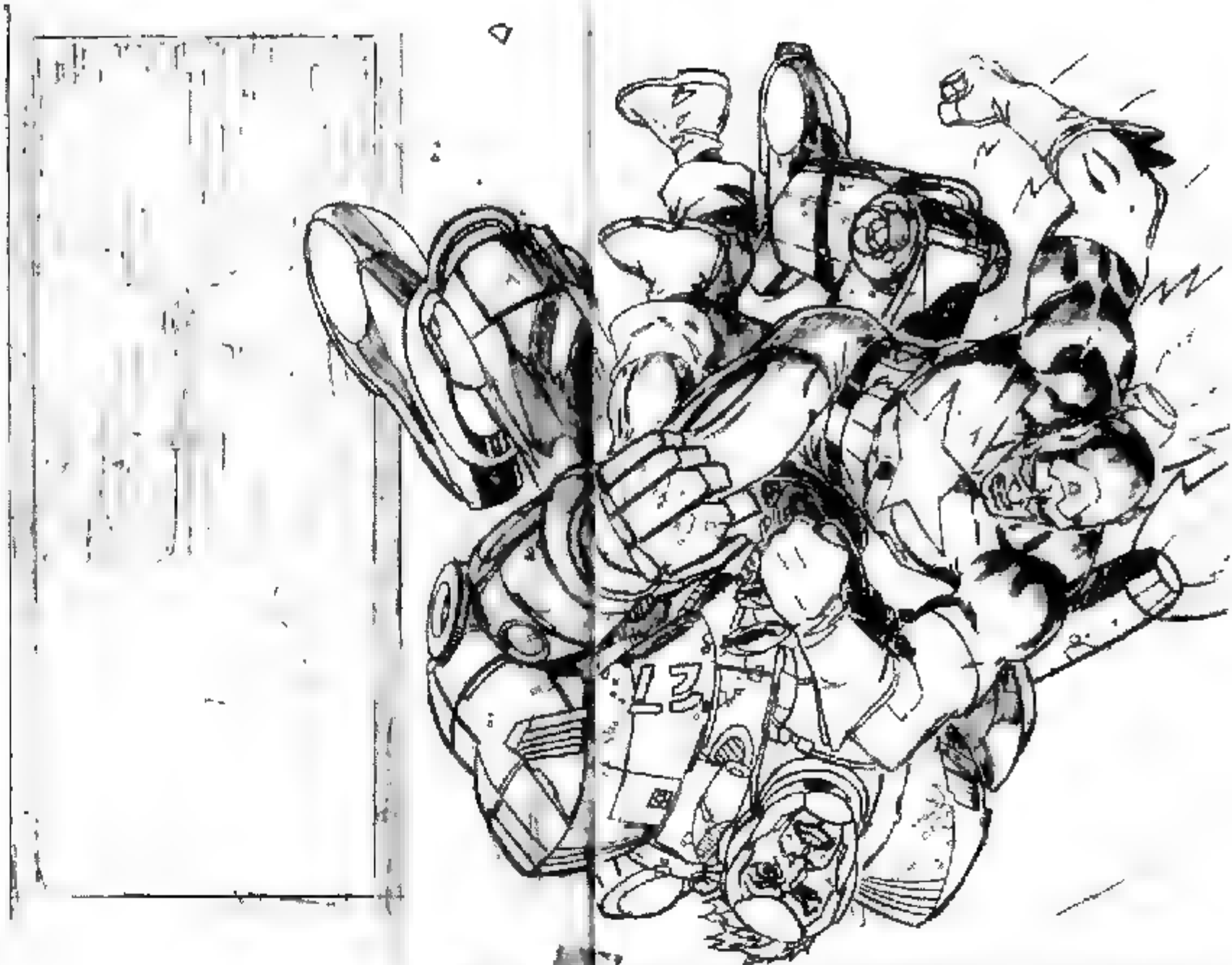
Final Penciled Page from CAPTAIN AMERICA SENTINEL OF LIBERTY #1.

What I tend to do is I'll do a page to a certain point, and then I move on. And I'll do sets of five pages each, and I'll do it throughout the course of a couple of days. And then I go back to the first one, and I spot all the things, right away, that I wouldn't have noticed had I continued penciling it.

Sketch: So stepping away from the page for a few days gives you that necessary critical distance from the work?

Ron: Absolutely.

Sketch: Does doing a cover take a full day of work for you?

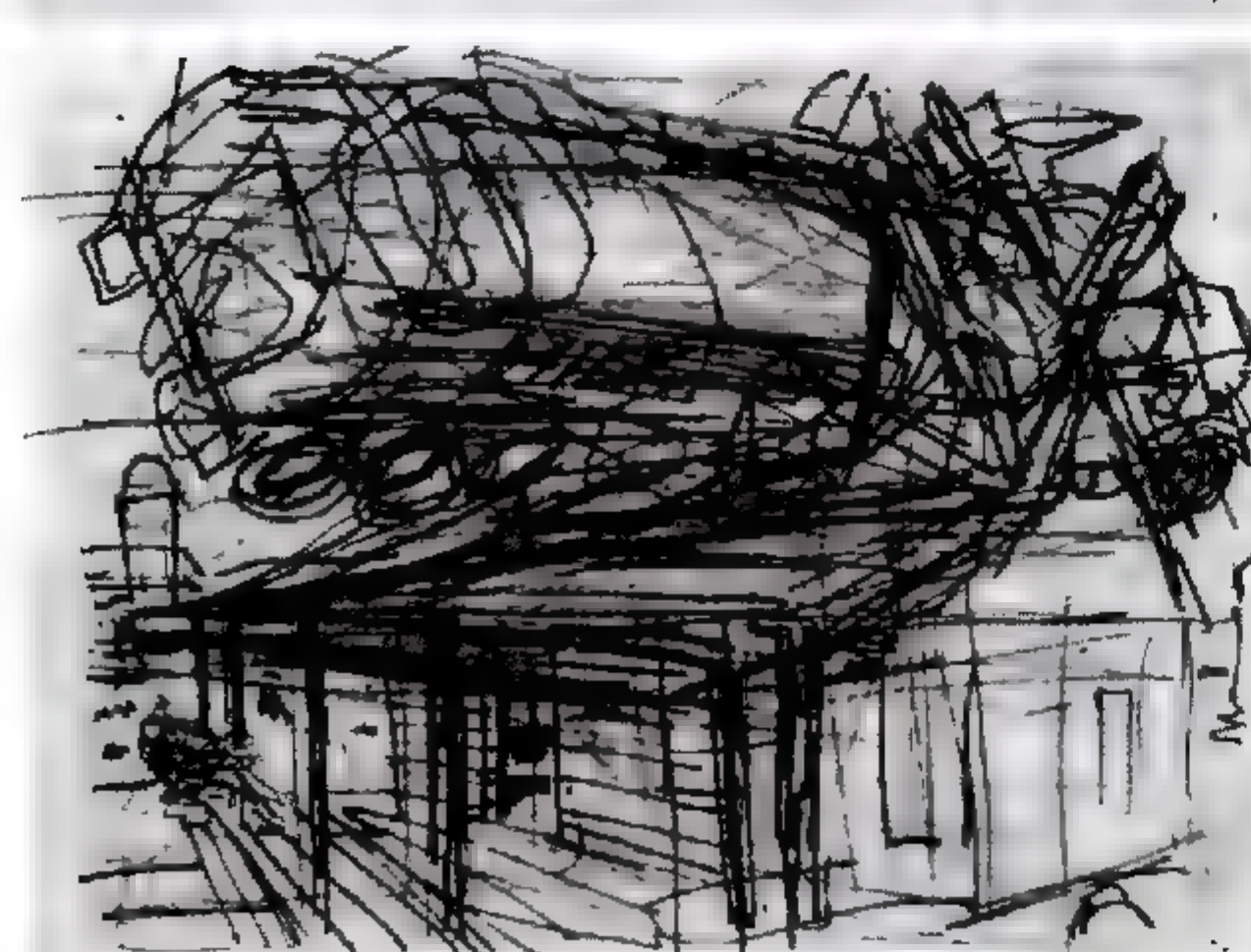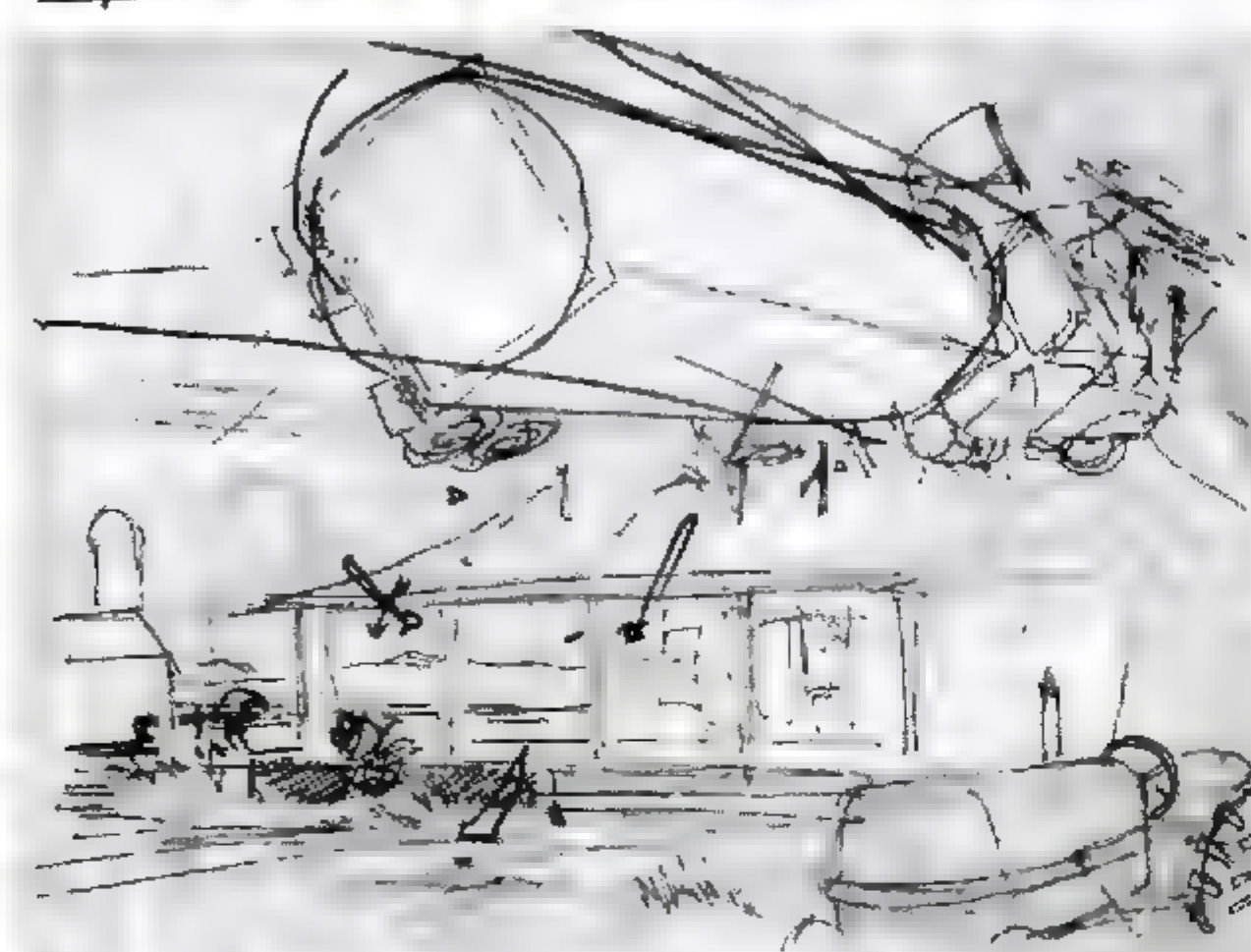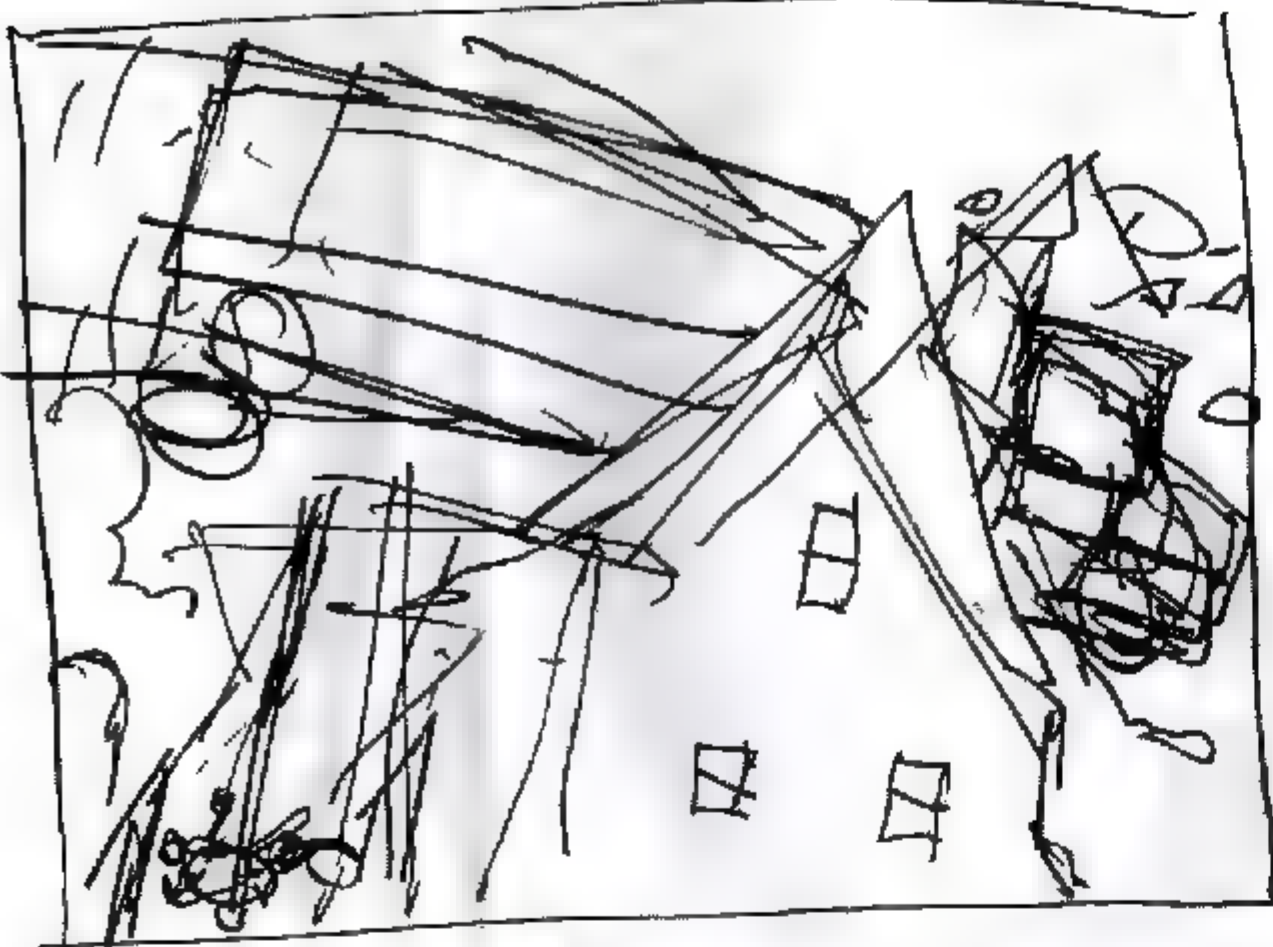**Ron:** Covers don't tend to take me that long, usually, because it's a single image. It's like doing just an oversized panel, really. The ones that take the most time are the pages, because there's a lot of panels, lots of tiny little details, and layout and arrangement and composition and all that. Where with one cover it's one composition, one thing, you know?

Sketch: Do you put the covers aside for a few days, too?

Ron: No, those I tend to do right away. I like to get those over with, because for me, covers are more an obtrusive part of my day. It's like, "Christ, I got to do that cover!" when I'm busy trying to get all the interiors done. [General laughter] So I'll tend to just go right through the cover and get that done, so I can put that aside and get back to penciling the interiors. A lot of guys love doing covers, but I'm more of an interior guy.

Original Penciled Page from CAPTAIN AMERICA SENTINEL OF LEBERTY #1.

Rough Layouts for a two page spread for HULK #1

Sketch: *What about the overall design of the characters? How do you approach that?*

Ron: I'm horrible at designing characters. I can come up with good ideas, but when it comes to costuming, I'm terrible at it! [General laughter] I'm just awful. I'm not a fashion designer.

Sketch: *With that in mind, how do you make somebody else's design natural for you? Is that just a function of sitting down and drawing the character until it's second nature?*

Ron: It's a lot more difficult. Sometimes it's weird, because I've noticed that when I look at someone else's costume design, it tends to work visually because of that person's particular artistic style. But then, when I try to apply that costume to my style, I tend to have a hard time to make it look right. [Laughter] I don't know if that makes any sense. It does to me, I know, because I've experienced that weird phenomenon. Actually, Kia Asamiya just redid some of the costume design on *Uncanny X-Men*. I like the designs a lot—a real lot—but once I drew them, they didn't look quite as good the way I drew them as the way he did them because of his particular style. But I made it work.

I think a lot of the costume designing happens based on the current trends in reality, or in movies, or what's hip in music, or that kind of thing. If you look back at the eighties, a lot of the X-Men costumes look like Michael Jackson or MTV kind of outfits with the wide shoulder things. Colossus had this kind of vest thing with the wide shoulders. It was very pop culture-MTV in the eighties. A lot of their styles and their costuming is really dependent on what's current.

You know, the current fad now with costuming is all leather. It became more Goth. Like a combination of leather and sort of Goth kind of outfitting, and that is sort of what Nightcrawler is wearing currently again, because we're going back to the costume design that Ian Churchill, I think it was, came up with. There are all these little doodads on it, kind of like little vents or things running along the sides of it, and it's all very suggestive of what's sort of current and trendy in reality, you know? So I don't know how much it has to do with the character's personality per se as it does just with what the current readership is going to find hip, or what they're going to identify with and feel comfortable with based on what is in the world around them.

I think Superman's costume, for example, that's sort of a timeless costume and it works. But I wouldn't necessarily have the grounds to say it's currently hip to wear a cape, and long blue underwear. But I think that's a character that's more identified with a wider age group of readers than maybe the X-Men are, and so the X-Men have to stick to the more hip, kind of trendy look to them because they appeal to the teenagers more. I don't know, I could be wrong about that.

But I think the clean, bold lines of Superman's costume kind of work within the context of his character, though. He's a clean, bold character, and his value system is very simplified. He stands for truth, justice, and the American way, basically. Now it's not really quite as politically correct to say, maybe; "the American way," but at least he's out for truth and justice. But I think his costume reflects that. I think the X-Men's costumes reflect more the characters' "outcast mutant" sort of mentality, in that they're costumes you wouldn't normally see on anybody. So in that they become different, along with their abilities.

Sketch: *What about props and settings? Does the design of these objects come a little easier for you?*

Ron: Yeah, I think that tends to be more of a draftsmanship sort of thing when that happens. I think I tend to just mix and match shapes that have a unified, appealing look to them. It's sort of a form-meets-function thought process where, when you draw a form, you try to make it appear as if it has a function in relation to the shape that's next to it. And that's how I approach doing machinery or anything else.

Cerebro, as an example, is a form meets function [piece of hardware]: it's a helmet with all of these things coming out. So that was, I'm sure, just sort of an easy thing to design. "What would Xavier wear on his head?" It kind of reminds me of that *Star Trek* episode where aliens steal Spock's brain, where Dr. McCoy put on this big helmet that had all of these things coming out of his head to make him smart. I think it's the same thing. But any kind of machinery, really, works best when you draw it when it's a uniform mass of shapes and organized in a pleasing manner. I think there are a lot of guys that do that real well.

I think John Byrne was a guy who knew how to put a lot of detail in machinery in the right spots, to make it look interesting and intricate, and make it look like it was functional. And really, when you examine it, it's just a bunch of little nuts and bolts and circles and squares all kind of jammed together inside a nice, thin little area, and then the rest of it is all just solid metal. And it made it look like there's all this detail, and things going on underneath.

John Romita, Jr. does it well. He tends to use these big, blocky shapes, and sort of takes them like puzzle pieces and puts them together like a Lego set, and it forms this interesting pattern of shapes that form his machines. Or even his buildings, for that matter. But I think that's really the approach I use, as well. It's just in finding a uniform, pleasing mass of shapes that work together.

Sketch: *After you find that shape - and this concerns the placement and body language of the characters as well - do you kind of take a step back and look at the overall page design, and just see how it all flows together?*

Ron: Well, yeah. Probably one of the things that used to slow me down   not so much

Finished Pages for HULK #1

anymore - was I tended to really go overboard with trying to make your eye flow from one panel to the next. I spent so much time on that, and that's really a lot of the storytelling, but that's sort of what my trademark was for a while, as far as my storytelling was concerned. I sacrificed some style for that when I was drawing my pages. I wouldn't spend a whole lot of time stylizing it, but trying to make the flow of the story work. And all those things work together I try to make them work, panel to panel, and to make the page a unified element itself, to make the eye go from one panel to the next Your eye may get drawn in by a piece of molding on a wall on the left side of this panel, and it brings you over to this panel [where] this person's leg brings you down to this panel. And it's all about creating flow and rhythm, and that tends to magically make a page work.

I don't know, it's kind of an interesting thing because the one thing I notice when I draw pages is that I have a tough time making them work. But when I'm done, I realize after studying it that what made it work is that I tended to make shapes draw your eye from one panel to the next successfully And if I didn't do that, then the page was never working for me. And, at the ultimate conclusion of a page I draw, that's usually what makes it work. You can always look at my pages and find your eye flows from one panel to the next - through whatever element may be in that panel. It could be a cloud, could be a car, could be a leg, could be a warped board in the stair It could be a solid black shadow

that draws your eye from one panel to the next. Even those machines we were just talking about. I use all of that to try to make the page work as far as the composition of the entire page

Sketch: *Well,* Captain America *seemed to keep gathering steam until it was abruptly ended*

Ron: Yeah, that was too bad. Because that's like aborting a baby in its eighth month, you know? It was just really bad. It was a really bad move creatively on Marvel's part. But Marvel doesn't look at it that way, to them it was just a marketing move. And this is where you really find the philosophy different between cold hard corporate thinking and creative thinking They didn't care about the baby of it, obviously. It was the creative community that yowled that it was an abomination for them to strip us of that, because it was a baby in its eighth month. Who knows what it would have developed into?

And they stripped us of that, and it proves what a cold, unfeeling machine that any company becomes [under the right circumstances], you know? And that's what Marvel had become. And that was the bigger tragedy of it. Marvel used to be about creativity, and having fun and creating these things It was all about the creation. And then it became all about the creation of the dollar, and the dollar is not a feeling, breathing entity. It's a cold tool Whereas a comic book is a breathing kind of creation that offers something in the way of escapism, or entertainment, or just the creation of the art and the story

It's all about the creation. And [after] Marvel did that, just stripped us of that, and then us going back at that point was like trying to create another creature altogether It was not the same thing

Sketch: *Right. And you guys seemed to approach* Captain America *in a very different way the second time around.*

Ron: Yeah. My stuff, from an artistic point of view, my stuff had definitely evolved differently. I did [*Silver*] *Surfer*, and I was experimenting with my style on that book, and a lot of that was coming through Like I said, I was on a Rudolfo Damaggio kick I was doing more realistic stuff.

That's not to say that I don't think some of my work on the first few issues of that second run weren't really good. I just think I was being judged by my first run and people wanted that, regardless of whether I was better or worse or what have you. They wanted the first run, and I think that's the reality of it. Because if you look at my first issue of *Captain America* the second time around, there's vast improvements in certain areas. Detail, backgrounds, what I was putting in some of the backgrounds. Some of my anatomy There were vast improvements over the course of a year and a half, or however long it was Yet people weren't responding to it as well, maybe because the charm of it wasn't the same It wasn't the same style; I wasn't really using a simplified kind of adventure style.

And Mark didn't write the same kind of story,

Cover for Hulk by Ron Garney.

either. Mark's story wasn't about adventure as much as it was about making a political statement on the Westernization of Japan. Whereas before, when Mark and I had first sat down and talked about Cap, he asked me what I had in my head where I thought the book should go. And I basically told him I would like Cap to be sort of a *True Lies* character. Maybe he's a secret agent who works for the United States, or he has to leave the United States and we get to see him go on adventures out in other countries or things like that. Maybe he loses his ability to stay in the United States for a while, and that's pretty much how all that "Man Without a Country" [storyline] came about. So we both put our heads together, and that's what happened. And it was all about the adventure, and the *True Lies* aspect of it, and him being an agent where we don't really know it's even Captain America. And you know, it really evolved into a fun adventure story.

Whereas the second time around it was a very self-contained, one-issue story That first issue about Japan, and the political statement of Captain America, and Captain America being a figurehead for America and being in Japan. But it wasn't the same. There wasn't quite the same sense of adventure there. And I was busy trying to draw every single Japanese person who'd ever walked the face of the earth in the background. [General laughter] You know, if it was going to be Tokyo, I wanted it to feel like Tokyo. I wanted to crowd the streets with people, and I don't think people really picked up on what I was going for. But I did and I had fun doing it, and I'm very proud of that issue, actually

Sketch: Between the two runs on Captain America *you did the* Silver Surfer. *Earlier, when you were talking about working on that book you mentioned that you were going for a more realistic style. What lead to that?*

Ron: No, I don't think I was going for a more realistic style on the *Silver Surfer* at all. I was very stylized on *Silver Surfer* if you really look at it. I was really getting into simplifying some graphic shapes, and I was really influenced by some of the

European guys at the time. I had visited Montreal for a convention and they had a bookstore out there that was just huge, and they had every freaking European hard cover comic you can imagine. They had work of people who are just brilliant artists there, and I was really getting into some of that stuff, and trying to apply it, trying to really stylize. [Laughter.]

Interestingly, most people don't appreciate my attempts at stylization back then, but I was really into it. But most people noticed that I was more into Moebius' approach. I love Moebius. I've been a fan of his since I was very young, since I was a little kid. I used to read his stuff in *Heavy Metal*, and I was always drawn to his work. I just think it's really amazing. So when I did the Surfer stuff I was having fun. I just wanted to have fun. I didn't care what anybody thought, and I was really just trying to draw like Moebius in a lot of ways, you know? [General laughter] In certain spots, certain spots it was more me, but there were definitely spots where I was just having a gas trying to do line weights the way he did them, and facial expressions, and things like that. And that was more my push on Surfer, just to create more of an alien feel to that character more than anything. But it wasn't about realism. I definitely don't think my stuff was realistic at all on Surfer. In fact, there were moments in my first Cap run that were more realistic.

Sketch: Well, the fact that Moebius influenced your run on Silver Surfer *brings up an interesting question, which is how you decide what you like about another artist's work and then incorporate those elements into your work, while making it your own?*

Ron: I've never been a huge advocate of ripping off somebody else's style, but I guess that's what you call it, rather than paying "homage" to it. There are two trains of thought, there. I think ripping somebody off is more stealing panel-for-panel what they do. There were some guys, and I won't mention any names, who were ripping off Jim Lee's pages. They were drawing right over them, and then changing the costumes. There was a site online, "swipe of the week" I think it was called, and these guys dedicated themselves to finding all these swipes in comics. That's just .. I mean, it's just wrong. They're getting paid to do [work that] somebody else has already done

But there's a difference between that and then paying homage, or just really being jazzed by somebody's style. There've been a lot of Mike Mignola guys out there. You know, guys who really tried to emulate what Mike Mignola was doing. And I think it's because you find something in the work that you feel, or you're so drawn to, because it appeals to your particular personality for whatever reason. I think a guy like Mike Mignola, his use of blacks is breathtaking. And if you want to gain some of that knowledge, or want some of that in your own work, it's good to try to study what he does and try to apply that to your own work. Eventually what happens is that you may look like you're trying to clone yourself off Mike Mignola or trying to do what he does, but what happens is it finally starts to integrate itself into your own way of thinking, and then it starts to become your own animal

Travis Charest is probably a good example [of this process]. I keep talking a lot about other artists, but he started off very clearly trying to do Jim Lee imitations, and he just sort of evolved into his own thing based on all the other influences he kept grafting onto himself And gratefully so, his stuff is

beautiful And I think as far as Moebius is concerned, and myself, maybe it was his line weights, maybe it something about his clean style I think a lot of his ideas, his very creative thought process...he has this interesting way of doing some wacky, bizarre kind of image that really, if you break it down, it makes no sense. It doesn't need to, it makes sense for itself It's hard to explain. I just found that very intriguing, and a kind of very intellectual way of creative thinking. And I just liked [the fact that] it was very clean. And I think you can see in my work that I've, probably over the years, gotten cleaner and cleaner, and I think that I'm drawn to his ability to be very clean and just use a flat color palette in a lot of his stuff.

So for whatever reasons, that appeals to me. And I was so jazzed by what he did on *Silver Surfer. Parable.* He just had this way of making the Surfer float around. I mean, when you're reading it, you could tell that he really felt the Surfer floating on the board. The board felt like it was floating. In reality, if it was next to you, it would just be floating there. And if you touched it, it would seem to be some kind of field beneath that to make it bounce up and down in midair and sort of stay there. You know, like if you hopped on it you could almost, just with your thought, move it with your feet and it would go in any direction. The way he drew the Surfer, it was very effortless. A lot of what John Buscema or Kirby had done on the Surfer, but it always looked like he was trying to keep his balance on the board. When Moebius drew him it didn't look like he needed to He could be upside down standing on the thing, and it was just part of his body, just the way he moved It was like he was one with the board, and I just thought that was a more .. well, I guess if there were such creatures like the Surfer, that it would be a more realistic approach to how it would work, you know? So I guess I was jazzed on that when I did *The Silver Surfer*, and I liked the way he drew Galactus. So I just tried to have fun with it. I didn't take myself too seriously and think I was trying to be him, or anything else It was a deliberate attempt, visually, to try to do what he was doing just for fun

And, interestingly, I didn't intend for it to be part of my own personal artistic vision in the long run But it ended up being [so] just from doing it. Just from trying to emulate that kind of style, even after Surfer, I found later that little things were sticking with me about the way that Moebius drew things. And even today I still draw certain faces just by habit now, because I was so jazzed by his material. If you tend to look you see the influence there, the same way you may see Neal Adams in John Byrne's work. Although I didn't quite go that far with it, where you can say, "Oh, that's a Moebius face," with every panel Just every now and then.

Sketch: Right You seem to have really incorporated your influences and blended them well with your own artistic vision, making it your own in a real sense

Ron: Yeah, well, it can't help but be that. If you have any kind of artistic integrity on your own you can't help but make it your own, a little bit. It just sort of works that way by nature. And by nature, you can never be a perfect emulation of a Moebius, or a Mignola, or whoever You just can't be, because you're not that particular person, anyway. You can try that style until you're blue in the face - and some guys come really close to aping other guys - but you never are, you're just an imitation, I suppose. So if you have any kind of sense of

independence in your work, or individuality, or that's what you're striving for, that stuff can't help but incorporate itself [into your work] and make it its own [animal]. It may be a form of swiping or stealing [in one sense], but it's really not. It's more about being influenced, I think, and learning from it.

Sketch: Have you made a conscious decision, at certain points in your career, that you needed to do something new, art-wise, for inspiration? I ask, because it almost seems like you've done that a couple times.

Ron: [Laughter] Does it really seem like that?

Sketch: Well, considering some of your answers, I kind of get that sense.

Ron: I just don't like being a one trick pony. Maybe I just get bored easily with my own work, and I try new things all the time based on what I think the character needs, or based on my own need to stay enthused, you know? I guess if I were to apply that principle on my everyday life outside of comics, I think that's just my personality type. I tend to have a lot of interests. I like to play sports, I work out, I do this, do that, and I'm into music.

I'm really not a one trick pony, and it either works to your advantage or not to your advantage. There are other guys who stick to one style and push it to its ultimate potential and stay with that, and that becomes them. I've never really been [like that]. I guess I'm an under achiever, and yet an over-achiever at the same time, because I like so many different things. But I tend to not bring one particular style to its ultimate potential. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing I don't know if it's either, it just is.

Sketch: Well, I also get a sense from looking at the progression of your work that you're also kind of challenging yourself. That you're looking for that next challenge to push yourself to the next level.

Ron: Yeah, that's true. When I was young, if I got bored with a class, I'd draw. I think that's what kind of made me get interested in drawing, it was sort of escapism. Because a lot of the time, whether it be math or English, it came fairly easy enough that I never really had to work too hard at it, so I'd get bored with it quick And that became an unfortunate habit, maybe, that if I start getting bored with something I need to find something new to restart my engines about it, you know, whether it be drawing or whatever.

I can remember being more like that in my first six or seven years of my career. I don't think I'm as much like that now. I'm more comfortable just drawing the way things come out of me, and a lot of times that just works best. I don't try to over think it anymore. I used to over think it too much. It was easy to get into the trap of looking at Frank Miller's work, or whoever, and just go, "Wow, I really need to be Frank Miller today. I love what he did here on this page, so I'm going to try that today!" And it's easy to get into that, but the problem is that you never become them, and it's almost madness to try that because you will just never be them. And this kind of alludes to what I was saying before; that you have to eventually give in to yourself and do what comes out of you naturally, and be happy with that. And just appreciate other artistic styles for what they are, and just appreciate the differences without trying to ape them or be them, because you never will be.

Sketch: That really leads nicely into the next question: what tips might you have for those artists hoping to better themselves or to break into the business?

Ron: I always tell guys who ask me that at conventions, "Just be honest with yourself about your ability and how much work you need to do. Listen to the pros who you respect or admire, and be honest about what it is you admire about their work." If you admire a guy just because he's flashy like Todd McFarlane, or because he draws noodley webbing, is that really what you want to emulate? And if it is, are you really good enough to do that? And be honest with yourself about that.

The hardest part for most people, I think, is to be honest with themselves about their own work. And that includes myself, or whoever. It took a long time for me to accept criticism when I was young about my work. And I think it's a tough thing for anybody. But if you can learn to understand that if you accept it... understand it, from people you respect and understand that they went through all those processes you're trying to go through, that you're only going to learn from that knowledge that they've accumulated, and that's how they got to where they are. I got to where I am for the same reasons. Talking to guys who I admire, and asking questions or finding out what they thought about how they approach a page, or how they approach drawing, or what their philosophy is.

You know it's not just about emulating artistic style, it's about emulating artistic attitude. That's the other thing I would say to these kids; that you can try to emulate noodley webbing, but can you emulate the artistic attitude, which is learn to grow and accept criticism. Most of the guys who have made a career out of this have gone through that process and learned to accept criticism. Some not, some more than others. But most, I would have to say have, and you have to emulate that attitude the same way you have to emulate their artistic style. Because you'll never get there if you're not able to take an honest assessment of what it is you need to improve upon.

So be critical of yourself. Not in a bad way, but in a constructive way.

Don't be afraid of your own mistakes. Because if you're afraid, fear gets you nowhere Fear stunts any kind of growth. Even I, at times, have to fight that. There's an instinct that happens, at least with me, whenever I look at one of my pages that tells me when something's wrong. A lot of times it's a nagging suspicion, and that's your intuition about the page, or your instinct. I can recall many times trying to ignore it, for time's sake, for making the schedule. And I found over time it's best not to ignore it.

If you feel there's something wrong with that face, even though you can't pinpoint it, that means there's something wrong with it. It may take you turning the page over and working on a light table, looking at it backwards, for it to pop out at you. Or it means just walking away from the page, or going on to the next page, until when you go back to the previous [troubling] page, it hits you what's wrong with it. That's one of the things that often works for me, is walking away from the page for a while or putting it aside. Because sometimes you're drawing a page, you're drawing and something's not quite right. You can't quite pinpoint what's wrong with it. It could be the layout, it could be anything. You put it aside and then, sometimes, for some reason, you go back to it with a fresh eye, it just hits you right away what's wrong with it. Sometimes you're underneath what's wrong with it because you're so

close to it you can't see it. So that's usually what I would tell a young artist, is just to really trust his own instincts, and trust the fact that he doesn't know everything yet.

One thing that I notice young artists do is they tend to, at conventions or wherever; when they want you to look at their portfolios and you start telling them there's something wrong with a certain panel, they have a reason behind it: "Well, that building is hitting the edge of that panel border because of this reason." And they've worked it all out in their heads to make sense of it, but really all it is is avoiding their instinct [of what's right]. If you have to come up with a reason why this doesn't work, that means you've thought it all out in your head, and that means you're in denial as to why that page doesn't work. You've come up with a reason that rationalizes the bad draftsmanship. And that's what you've got to avoid. Take an honest assessment of what you need to do to get better.

Sketch: Well, after the second run on Cap, you ended up on The Hulk. *How did that come about, and what lead to that decision?*

Ron: After two years worth of Cap stories, it just was still proving to not be a stable environment [or] book for me to be on. I just wanted to go to another book, start fresh, start with a new character. I'd done two years worth of Cap stories, twenty-four issues, and I just wanted to try something different. And so *The Hulk* thing came about, and that's another character that I'd had it in my head how I would love to do him, and it was offered to me. John Byrne had called me up a few of months earlier and wanted to work on something over at DC. And I couldn't, because I was under contract with Marvel. So then this thing came about, and I think I called him and asked, "Would you be interested in that?" And he said, "Yeah!" And that's sort of what happened. And I had a gas working the first few issues

Rough Layouts for UNCANNY X-MEN #412

Figure Studies

How did you and John work together during that period? Was it a case where he basically came up with the plots on his own, or were you two tossing ideas around?

Ron: No, he was writing full scripts. He just left the page counts up to me, like where the panels ended and began. And I did rearrange and redirect a few spots on some of his [scripts], but I always talked to him first.

But I didn't work too closely with John on the stories. I think the second issue that we did together I rewrote just the opening scene. I think John had written it, "We open on the Hulk just smashing a town to bits," for the most part. You know, he's just rampaging around, throwing tractors and smashing things, and yadda, yadda, yadda. And the way he wrote the dialogue I thought was really cool. The first line was "Yesterday, it was peaceful here." And it said, "Yesterday, people went on with their lives," blah, blah, blah. And so I thought it would be cool to just open up with that one line; "Yesterday, it was peaceful here," and just open it up on a covered bridge with a very peaceful stream. And then as the dialogue goes on, we zoom in through that covered bridge. Now that covered bridge is sort of a metaphor for the whole town. As we zoom in through one of the square windows of that covered bridge, we zoom in through that window and in the distance we sort of see the Hulk leaping at us, at the camera, through the very organized, bordered old window of this covered bridge. And then, as we turn the page, the next line is "That was before the Hulk came to Faulkner." And then, when we turn the page and read that line, we see the Hulk smashing the whole covered bridge into a million bits.

Now I just thought, metaphorically and for significance, that would be a cooler way to open the

story. And then the next few pages are the Hulk just smashing everything. I think I did a double spread with seventy-two panels on it with him smashing everything in town. And so there are ways of telling a story, that John allowed me to do, that I had fun with. But things like that I definitely talked with him about, or let him know what I was going to do. That's about how closely we worked.

Sketch: It also seemed to be a book that combined a whole lot of the best aspects of your work in one package. The whole idea of this immense engine of destruction surrounded by all these other characters who were really important to the story seems to have suited you well.

Ron: Right. Yeah, definitely. I enjoyed drawing that book, and those stories, for that reason. I liked drawing inside the jail cell with the Sheriff, and I liked drawing his daughter, and I liked them sitting having a milkshake together, and I liked drawing all those normal, mundane things. For me, that's what it's about. I just like that. A lot of younger guys are more into spectacle. They want to draw some giant robot with a hundred cannons coming out of his armor. And I like that, but I really get into those stories, too. The human elements, and drawing real people. And then when we finally do get to the Hulk, and he's this big, green, scary monster with blacks all over him and just a crazy look in his eye and he's smashing everything, there's real contrast there.

And I just find that fascinating, even artistically. I like drawing the Sheriff as a real guy. I like drawing his daughter as a real little girl. So that when we get to the Hulk, he's this scary, contorted, twisted, grimacing, kind of cartoonish thing. Because if that's

what you saw in reality, that would be just as shocking. And so artistically in the comic book, there was that contrast there with John's writing and my art. At least, that's the way I was consciously approaching it. That I would do all of the [scenes like] Bruce Banner helping the town repair itself after a Hulk rampage, the workers working together in the sunset, and making that real. But then when we saw the Hulk he was this cartoonish gargoyle-thing with cartoony line weights, and cartoony eyes, and just crazy. So there's just a real contrast there, and I really enjoyed doing that.

Sketch: Well also it just goes back to the ideas of tempo and flow which we discussed earlier, where a slow build to the climax makes the payoff that much richer, the catharsis more satisfying, because you've firmly established that whole normative atmosphere before you shattered it by introducing something unworldly.

Ron: Right. Right, absolutely.

I think our first issue, John and I; *Hulk* #1, you see some of that. I just had so much fun artistically on that first bunch of issues with John, and I think they're some of the best I've ever done. Most people wouldn't agree because they love my *Captain America*, because the stories of Cap and the art meshes so well. But artistically speaking, the best stuff I've ever done was on my early issues of *The Hulk*. Because I was so jazzed to do. I don't think I was ever that excited just to draw stuff. I mean, we open up in the first issue with a little girl laying on her stomach, playing with crayons, and there's a little Tasmanian Devil in the background on the TV, which I stuck in there, because it's sort of a metaphor for the Hulk. And it's just fun. It was just fun, and it was real. And then the next page you

see a tractor trailer go right through the house from the outside. So that kind of stuff was just a gas to draw, you know? Just to make it real, make it cinematic, and make the movie work. That's what I'm into it for.

Sketch: Well, after The Hulk, *you took a vacation. That was really your first vacation since you entered the field, wasn't it?*

Ron: Yeah. It was a long time; ten or eleven years actually, before I had a vacation. I was just burnt out, and I had a lot of personal things in my life I needed to address, and I needed a break. I just couldn't do it anymore for a while. I didn't really take a year off. I took six months or so off.

A few months off, then I started getting calls from DC Comics and other comic companies. I just kept saying, "No," to everything, and then finally DC pretty much begged me to do the [*Worlds at War*] thing with Jeph Loeb. And I was like "Okay." I needed to work a little bit. But I was just having fun with my sketchbook and doing it for the fun of it, which I hadn't done in so long. And so they asked me to the *Worlds at War* thing, and I did, and I had fun doing it, and I did a good job on it, I think. And then I was supposed to be working on a Superman thing with DC and Jim Krueger. We had spent a lot of time trying to work that out, and DC just didn't like the story. So I couldn't sit around on my hands anymore. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and then the [*Uncanny*] *X-Men* offer came. And I told DC that I needed to work, but they didn't really have anything for me at the time, so I went with the X-Men.

Sketch: Taking on that book seems like it's the logical next step for you in your career.

Ron: I guess. Maybe. It's hard to say what that is. My first issue was less than stellar I think. again, it was [due to] some stuff going on in my personal life, and I hadn't worked in quite a while, and it was getting tough to get my chops back right away. That's gotten better. I was very slow doing it for a variety of reasons. I wasn't as motivated as I thought I was going to be, but that's changed and I'm having fun doing it again. That issue suffered due to a combination of things. Artistically, it was my fault. I'm not taking all the responsibility for it, obviously, but I'll be the first to admit that my head was not where it needed to be. To be perfectly honest, I was going through a break up with somebody, and it was a very difficult time. You try not to let your personal stuff get mixed in with your professional [stuff], but sometimes it's hard to be there, mentally, as you should be. I'm just being candid about it. But things got better, and I did much better work on the second one, and the third one is even better. That's the way life goes. But people should not give up on me just yet.

Sketch: You feel like you've gotten your legs back on the book, then?

Ron: Yeah, they're coming back. Yeah. Definitely the second issue is markedly better than the first one I did.

Sketch: Do you think you'll have any input into the direction the book will take?

Ron: I think so. They seem to be very interested in what I think. Whether or not they are just "yessing" me to death or not is another story. That's the politics of any vocation; whether your ideas are really, sincerely appreciated or not. But they seem to always ask me, and a lot of times when I've come up with stories, they usually get used. It's possible that will happen here. I don't know yet.

Sketch: I'm thinking that with Chuck [Austen, the writer] being an artist himself, that might be more conducive to you building a real synergy in your work together.

Ron: Yeah, yeah. I like the way he writes. I'm working on one of his scripts right now. And it's pretty easy to visualize what he's going for, probably because he is an artist.

Sketch: Since you're not necessarily interested in doing any comics writing presently, does that mean you're not interested in doing a creator owned book of your own?

Ron: No, no, that's not true. I have a lot of interest in launching my own characters. I have a whole idea set aside for someday. But it's just a matter of that happening. As I said, I forego all that right now because I have a band, *Ronin*, and we play out, and I really enjoy writing music. But I do have a whole idea for a creator owned book I want to do someday.

And that's not to say that I'll never write a comic. I may, just right now the circumstances aren't allowing it. So that be the deal.

You can find out more about Ron Garney's band, *Ronin*, by visiting www.4ronin.com.
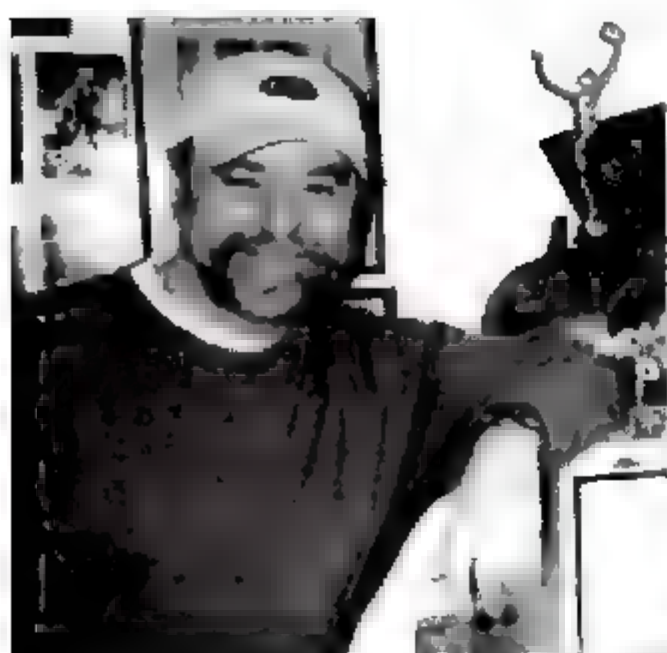
BEAU SMITH
From The Ranch
THE BIG KEEP

As I've mentioned many times in my articles here at *Sketch* - I've been in the comic book/entertainment business for quite a while.

Through the course of these wonderful years I've learned a few things. Sometimes it's because I really need to soak the info in if I wanna keep my job. Other times because, like a dried up old booger under a school desk. .I've just been around so long. You tend to learn things even if you aren't really trying.

One very important thing that I've learned is to *keep good records*.

Now I'm not talking about those old vinyl things your mom and dad used to listen to Tommy James and The Shondells on. I'm talking about contracts, hand written notes, ads, flyers, emails, letters...you get the picture.

They make file cabinets cheap. Buy one or two. Don't let me hear about you cryin' about how keeping all that paper will take up room. I bet that most of you reading this have a room full of old comics, action figures, and some stuff that I REALLY don't wanna know about Keeping these documents in a metal file ain't gonna kill ya The reason I mention metal is because ya never know when there could be a fire. I've played that role in *Backdraft*. A few years ago I lost everything in my office due to a fire. Not only my records, but a bunch of my comics, books, and sports stuff as well. Lucky for me I always divided my records and personal stuff between my office and my home. Not all was lost, but a large chunk was.

It doesn't matter if you're an artist, writer, or on the business end. Keep copies! Back up that computer, and then make sure you keep the back up disks some where other than right beside your computer. I get so paranoid that I back up my back ups. You'd think I had something *important* on my computer.

Artists, make and keep copies of your pencils/inks. Shrink 'em down if ya have to, but do it. Ya never know when you might need 'em. Writers, the same with your scripts. With copy machines, faxes, and computers this stuff is so much easier to do than it was when I started out. I used a typewriter with carbon paper. Some of my oldest scripts are still on carbon

Notes and memos are very important for those on the business end, as well as creators. Keep all that the publisher sends you. You never know when a lawsuit of some sort will come up and you will need these bits of evidence to save your ass, or at least help bail it out. Save those hand-written notes, faxes, and other little scraps of paper. These are very important. You never know five years down the road when something will come up to try and take a hunk out of your butt. Keep a phone log of who you talked to or called that day. Try and make a brief note on what was talked about. I've found this to be very helpful when others try to smear lipstick on a pig and tell me it's pretty.

Keep any ad or press item on a project you're connected with. Know what was said and printed about what you worked on All of this really doesn't take up that much room when you come down to it.

The reason I stress this is because you not only have to protect yourself if you ever get called for a deposition or to court as a witness...or worse, because you're being sued .but because if you don't protect yourself...who will?

These are small things, but they are smart things. Be a boy scout...be prepared.

As a creator, having small notes that you had for a story idea lying around will really help when you think the creative tank has run dry. There have been many times when I went through my idea file and found stuff that I thought of five years ago, and now have a great opportunity to put to use. When you're talking about Hollywood folks wanting to give you a load of cash...it's worth it.

Artists, I have always told you to keep a sketchbook. This is so important. You can look back through one and see something that could spark the next big thing for you. Who'd ever thought that Frank Miller would look back at a sketch that he did of an old guy wearing the bat suit that would turn into *The Dark Knight*? Now...I don't know if it really happened that way.... but you catch my drift

Keep records of any contact that you make at a convention, email, or phone. The flunky for someone today is the next big shot Hollywood producer of tomorrow. Keep it! Also, cut out any magazine articles that will make great reference or story ideas later. I've been doing this for years. I've always got something to go to in a time of need. Plus, it's a great excuse to have loads of photos of beautiful babes...reference. .. Riiiiight!

You'll be able to keep most of this in your computer, and that'll save space. Then you'll have even more room for that Godzilla collection or those rare Beau Smith action figures.

By doing this you'll be your own best friend. I should know...I've been my own for all my life I like me.

As always, you have any questions, suggestions, or photos of Mary Hart.. just send 'em here to the Ranch

Beau Smith
The Flying Fist Ranch
P.O. Box 706
Ceredo, WV 25507
beausmith2@earthlink.net

Adios, amigos.

CHUCK DIXON
Keepin' It Real
How to Keep Your Writing Fresh, Happening, and Now!

There's a lot of talk about how to keep comics relevant and new. With so many comic book franchises creaking past fifty years of age, you might wonder how any new spins could possibly be left on the old workhorse characters at the major companies.

Well, I've been looking over the comics magazines and reading on line interviews and spoken to dozens of hip, with-it, "whack" new writers, and gotten their take on how to liven up the tired old genre we call graphic storytelling.

The first is so simple I can't believe I didn't think of it myself. It requires the writer to look at the way the characters communicate with one another, and find different ways to express those worn out old sentiments.

> CRIMINAL: Wh-who are you?
> BATMAN: I'm Batman. Relay my name to your
>   acquaintances.

Or you can delve deeper into a character's psyche. and uncover entire new layers of nuance and phraseology.

> SPIDER-MAN: With awesome might comes increased
>   societal obligations.

It's incredible, but these youngsters are really thinking "outside the box" for new and fresh approaches to long-established material. They're seeking to update the casts of classic comics, making them relevant for the more demanding and sophisticated comics-consuming audience of today

> CITIZEN 1: Look! In the near distance!
> CITIZEN 2. Is it a spotted owl?
> CITIZEN 3· Is it a Boeing 737 with increased seating
>   capacity?
> CITIZEN 4: No, it's Superman!

Many of these tyros are willing to look deep inside themselves, draw from their own past experiences and bring those to old situations and continuity, uncovering new meanings and subtler shadings to what were familiar icons.

> JOREL: There he goes, the last son of Krypton
> LANA: I still wish we'd had a girl

More than that, they're eschewing staid morality and the barriers of age-appropriate material to make work that is more vital and daring than their predecessors By doing this they reveal a depth of feeling and emotional sub-current that even these characters' creators were unaware of.

> UNCLE SCROOGE. ...a sunken Spanish galleon
>   filled with emeralds'
> HUEY: You're fulla.
> DEWEY: S**t.
> LOUIE: Unca Scrooge!

Another startling renovation these scribes are bringing to bear on the (once) four-color medium is introducing a more natural kind of dialogue. Put simply, they write the way "people really talk " This places the comic legends in a whole new light, and makes them more "genuine" or "real".

> DAREDEVIL: I'm blind.
> KAREN: Who's blind?
> DAREDEVIL I am
> KAREN: What?
> DAREDEVIL: Blind. Me. I am blind.
> KAREN: Blind? As in "can't see"?
> DAREDEVIL: Look, forget I said anything, okay?
> KAREN: What?

Most daring of all is the brash placement of pressing social issues within the context of long-entrenched comic book scenarios. This "shaking up" of the status quo is referred to as "retro-continuity." In plain English, this means that if the writer finds that he (or she, or them) cannot relate to the past material then they simply return to old continuity, and alter the stories and themes to suit their own talents. This creates exciting new paradigms in which anything is possible. Comics are no longer "one size fits all!"

> CAPTAIN AMERICA You had something you
>   needed to tell me, Bucky, old pal'
> BUCKY: The Red Skull and I are having an affair.

Seeing what these wild and crazy kids are up to makes me wish I wasn't such an old fuddy-duddy, mired in the constraints of story structure and a prisoner of the patriarchal, sexist gulag that years of reading sub-literate comics trash has placed me in.

But it's not too late for you!

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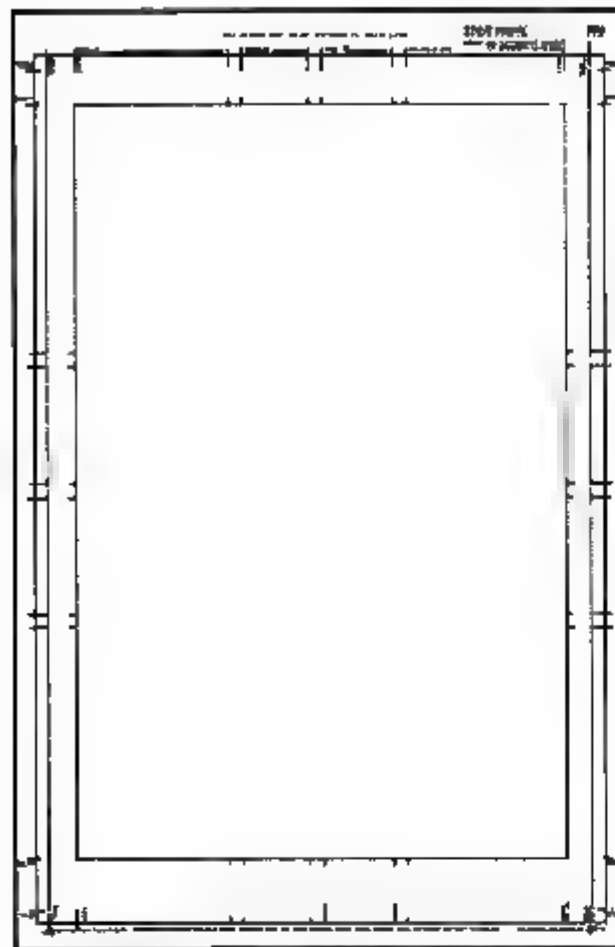
Full Trim Format Art Boards

PLY:
Ply is the thickness of the paper. A 2 ply paper has two pieces of paper pressed together and a 3 ply has 3 pieces of paper pressed together which is thicker than 2 ply.
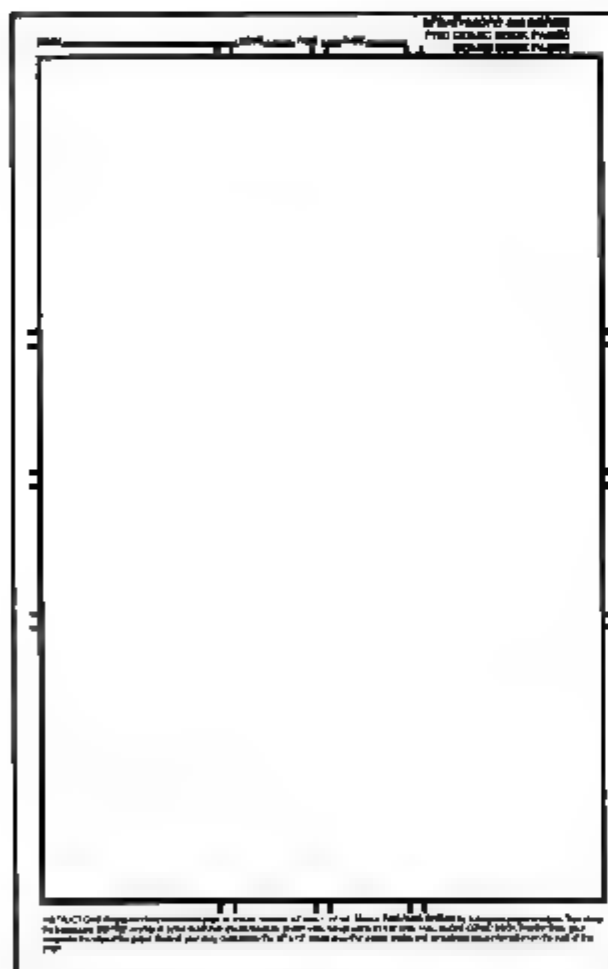
Traditional Format Art Boards
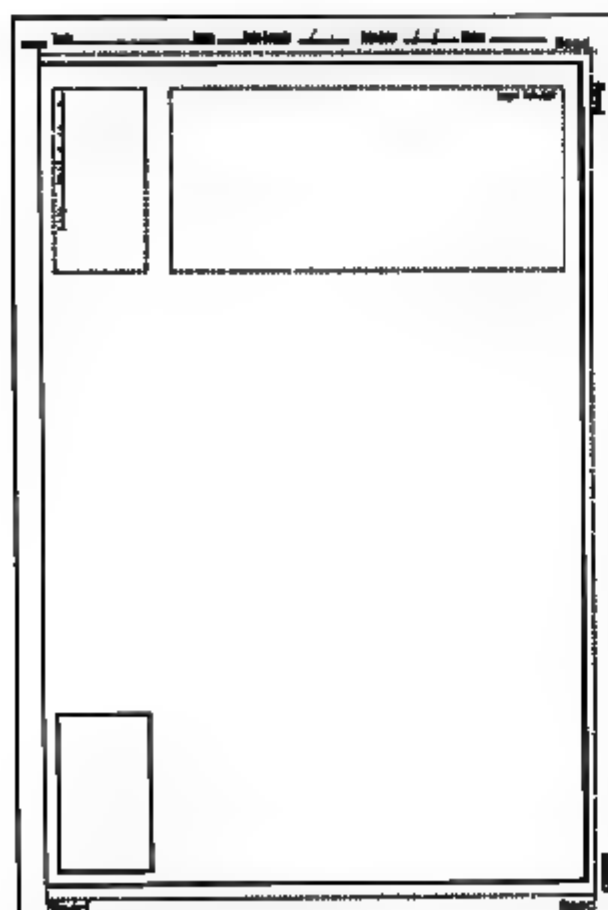
Cover Sheets

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300 Series Full Trim Format
PRO 300 Series Comic Book Boards is an economical heavyweight paper. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the Pro 300 Series is preprinted with a newly designed non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals do.
• **PRO 300 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100lb. 100% acid free paper. This Strathmore board is ideal for pen ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker
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11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged
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400 Series already has a very serious history. Comic Book Boards 400 series is printed on the finest art paper available, **Strathmore**. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the 400 Series is preprinted with a non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals draw.
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• **500 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100% cotton fiber acid free board. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, charcoal and watercolor
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PRO COMIC BOOK ART BOARDS
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Blue Line has taken the quality paper that they have used in the "Pro" pages for years and printed a newly designed Full Trim format in non-photo blue ink.
This offering the artist the quality of Pro pages with an advanced page border.
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Use pencil ink (brush recommended), markers, wash, acrylics.
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11" x 17" 3- ply brite art boards with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area and 1 Cover Sheet with 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo border printed/ bagged.

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(Traditional Format)
Pro Comic Book Boards brite white surface offers a smooth surface to pencils and inking with a brush literally glides across the surface (quill pen not recommended). Pro has offered thousands of artist the opportunity to begin their careers on a pre-printed boards like the professional publisher uses.
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Page size is 11" x 17" with a non-photo blue image area of 10" x 15". In addition, each pack also includes one page of Blue Line Comic Book Cover Sheets, specifically laid out with a larger image area for standard comic book cover designs
Use pencil, ink (brush recommened), markers wash, acrylics
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Use pencil, ink (brush) marker, wash
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14" x 22" with a 12" x 19" non-photo blue border.
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Over Sized Comic Book Art Boards 12 per pack smooth surface pages (14 x 22) with Traditional Border. Premiere 300 Strathmore Series Smooth is a 100lbs paper preprinted with a non-photo blue border that is the trademark of all Blue Line Pro boards. This allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals do. Professionals draw their illustrations larger then they appear in the finished product. This helps minimize mistakes. The main advantage of Strathmore is its 100% acid free feature. This prevents the signs of aging such as yellowing. Premiere 300 Series Comic Book Boards serves as the premiere economic heavyweight paper for the Strathmore series
- **ITEM#BL1058 SRP $25.95**
12 pages per pack.
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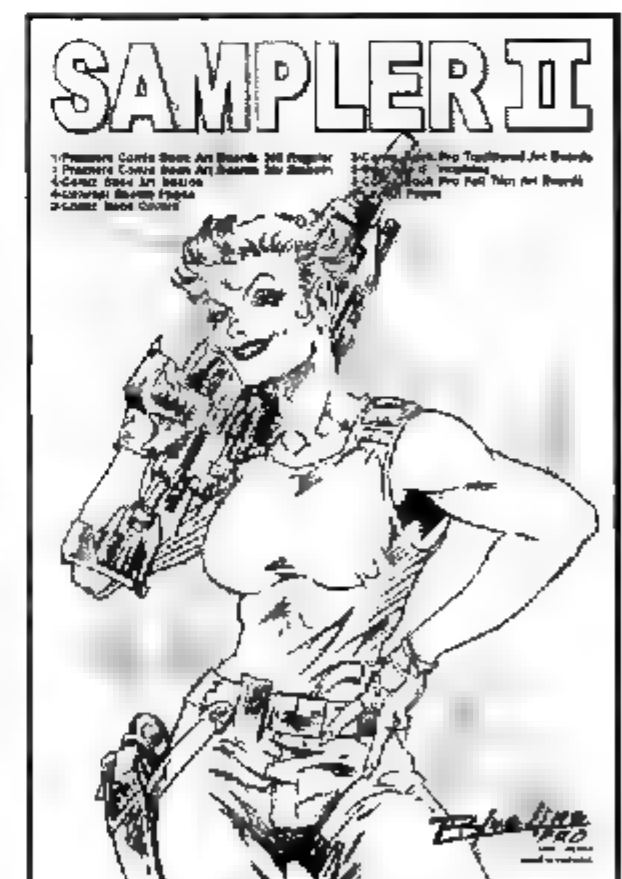
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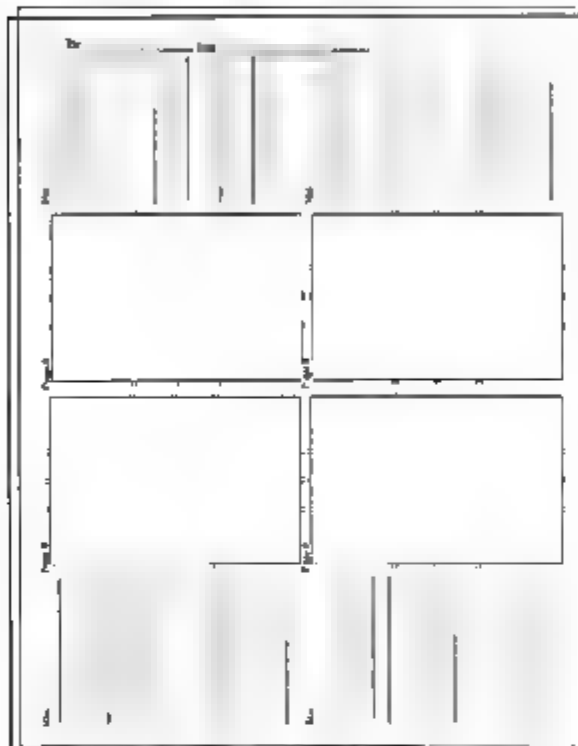25 pages of 8 different Blue Line products.

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100 sheets of 60 lb. 8 1/2 x 14 pages with 3 panels padded with colored cover.

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BLP COMIC STRIP ART BOARDS 12 Daily Comic Strips and 2 Sunday Comic Strips

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25 art pages printed in non-photo blue/ bagged.

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Used for story boarding your comic book story. A great tool for artists or writers to work out details for the story along with layouts of pages.

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50 pages of heavy illustration board to carry around in your pocket to have ready when your hit with a revolutionary vision. Great for quick sketches and designs. Featuring Blue Line's quality illustration paper. Great for penciling, inking and washes. 50 pages / 5" x 9 1/2" / padded / two-color cover

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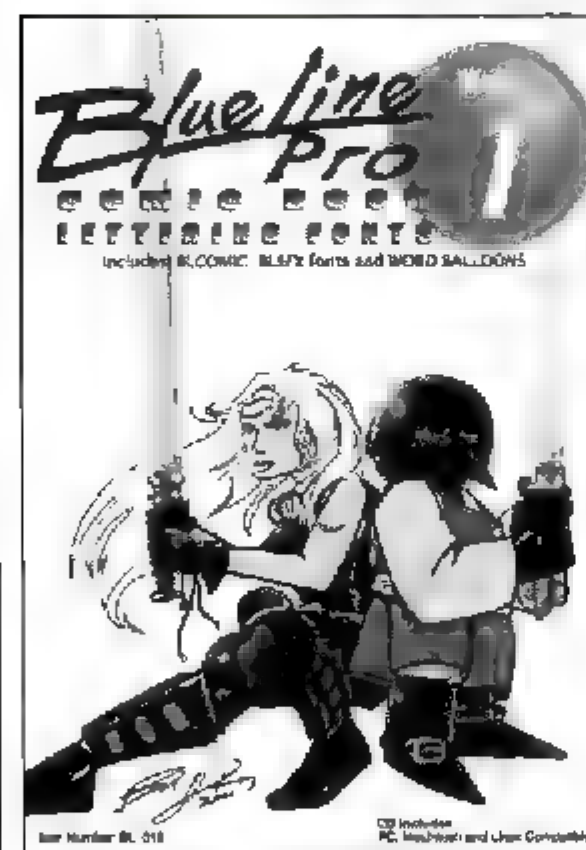
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

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BLCOMIC font is formatted for Macintosh and PC Compatibles in a TruType format.

BLSFX is a special effects font with pre-created sound effects that are ready for you to drop into place.

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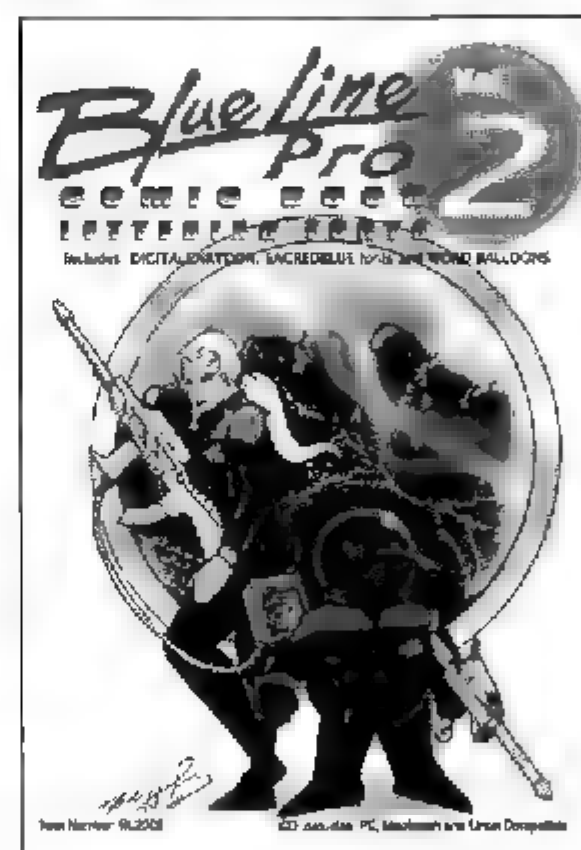
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789!?.,.([ ] ( ))/ $ +=-
DIGITALCARTOON-Italic Bold
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789!?.,.([ ] ( ))/ $ +=-
DIGITALCARTOON-Bold
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0123456789!?.,.([ ] ( ))/ $ +=-

SACREDBLUE-Regular
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789!?.,.(' ' [ ])/ $ +=-
SACREDBLUE-Italic
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0123456789!?.,.(' ' [ ])/ $ +=-
SACREDBLUE-Italic Bold
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789!?.,.(' ' [ ])/ $ +=-
SACREDBLUE-Bold
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789!?.,.(' ' [ ])/ $ +=-

BLDIGITALCARTOON and BLSACREDBLUE fonts are formatted for Macintosh and PC Compatibles in a TruType format. Also included is user configurable word balloons in eps format.

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- ITEM# BL2002 - *SRP $19.95*

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1234567890
Bold
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890
Italic
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890
Bold Italic
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890

BLINKERSDELIGHT-Regular
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890
Bold
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890
Italic
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890
Bold Italic
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYX
1234567890

BLCOMICCREDITS and BLINKERDELIGHT fonts are formatted for Macintosh and PC Compatibles in a TruType format. Also included s user configurable word balloons in eps format.

Blue Line Pro Comic Book Fonts Vol.3
- ITEM# BL2003 - *SRP $19.95*

INDIA INK

• Higgens Black India Ink
A non-clogging ink for lettering pens and brushes. Opaque semi-gloss black finish and waterproof
-AR-4415 Black Ink (Higgins) 1oz. $3.00
- AR-EF44011 Black Magic Ink (Higgins) 1oz $3.50
Higgins Waterproof Black Magic Ink is non-corrosive, free-flowing, and non-clogging. Great for use on tracing velium and other film surfaces.

• Pelikan Drawing Ink
One of the finest drawing ink available. Pelikan ink is great with technical pens, graphic and fine art papers or tracing cloth
- AR-PE211862 Black India Ink (Pelikan) 1oz. $4.75
- AR-PE211169 Black India Ink (Pelikan, 8oz. $18.75
• Pelikan "T" Ink
Permanent and completely waterproof. Good with matte-surfaces or waterproof tracing cloth.
- AR-PE221374 Black Ink Pelikan "T" 1oz $6.00
• KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH INK
Rapidograph ink, Black, opaque ink for drafting film, paper, and tracing cloth. For use with Koh-I-Noor Rapidograph Pens.
- AR-3084-FI Koh-I-Noor Ink $3.95

• WHITE OUT
FW. Acrylic Artist Waterproof White Ink
Great for use with technical pens, brushes, and dip pens.
- A- R-FW-O11 FW White Acrylic Artist Ink $5.00

BRUSHES
• Winsor/Newton Series 7
Made with Kolinsky sable with traditional black handle. Great brush
- AR-5007001 Winsor/Newton Series7 Size#1 $18.95
AR-5007002 Winsor/Newton Series7 Size#2 $22.95
- AR-5007003 Winsor/Newton Series7 Size#3 $36.75
Round Brushes
Made with natural Sable with excellent edges and points for precise strokes
- AR-NB-38-0 Round Brush Size #0 $3.00
- AR-NB-38-1 Round Brush Size #1 $3.25
- AR-NB-38-2 Round Brush Size #2 $3.95
- AR-055008016 Round Brush Size#3 $3.95

RAPHAEL KOLINSKY FULL RIGGER BRUSH (SERIES 8826)

Kolinsky full bellied rigger brushes are great for line work and lettering
- AR-SAV25-8826-02 Raphael Size 02 $17.95
- AR-SAV25-8826-04 Raphael Size 04 $19.95
- AR-SAV25-8826-06 Raphael Size 06 $22.95
-AR-SAV25-8826-08 Raphael Size 08 $35.95
- AR-SAV25-8826-10 Raphael Size 10 $56.95

RAPHAEL RED SABLE ROUND (SERIES 8424)

Kolinsky red-sable round brushes have a fine point and full belly that are great for long thin lines.
-AR-SAV25-8424-3/0 Size3/0 $7.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-2/0 Size 2/0 $8.50
-AR-SAV25-8424-0 Size 0 $8.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-01 Size 01 $9.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-02 Size 02 $10.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-03 Size 03 $11.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-04 Size 04 $15.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-05 Size 05 $19.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-06 Size 06 $24.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-07 Size 07 $27.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-08 Size 08 $29.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-09 Size 09 $33.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-10 Size 10 $44.95
-AR-SAV25-8424-12 Size 12 $64.95

RAPHAEL PURE KOLINSKY ROUNDS (SERIES 8404)

Pure Kolinsky round brushes are the Raphael's Flagship brushes. With a fine point and full belly, this brush will hold a high paint load. These brushes have an orange tip handle. Recommended by Tom Lynch
-AR-SAV25-8404-6/0 Size6/0 $15.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-5/0 Size5/0 $15.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-4/0 Size4/0 $15.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-3/0 Size3/0 $15.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-2/0 Size2/0 $16.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-0 Size 0 $17.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-01 Size01 $20.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-02 Size02 $24.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-03 Size03 $30.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-04 Size04 $37.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-0 Size05 $54.95
-AR-SAV25-8404-06 Size06 $68.95

RAPHAEL KAERELL ROUNDS (SERIES 8394)

Synthetic Kaerell fine tip water media brushes have a soft fine natural hair feel, yet are more economically prices.
-AR-SAV25-8394-3/0 Size 3/0 $5.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-2/0 Size 2/0 $6.50
-AR-SAV25-8394-0 Size 0 $6.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-01 Size 01 $6.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-02 Size 02 $6.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-03 Size 03 $7.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-04 Size 04 $8.50
-AR-SAV25-8394-05 Size 05 $8.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-06 Size 06 $9.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-07 Size 07 $12.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-08 Size 08 $13.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-10 Size 10 $14.95
-AR-SAV25-8394-12 Size 12 $19.95

RAPHAEL PEN HOLDERS
Raphael's universal penholders will hold all nibs. Their contoured, tapered handles are comfortable to hold and elegant to look at. Available in a variety of woods. Synthetic Kaerell fine tip water media brushes have a soft, fine natural hair feel, yet are more economically prices
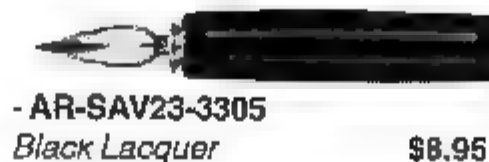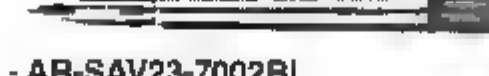
- AR-SAV23-3305
Black Lacquer $8.95
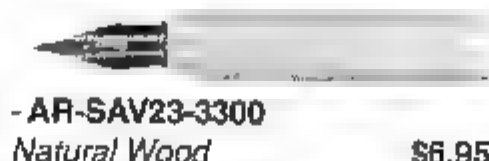
- AR-SAV23-3300
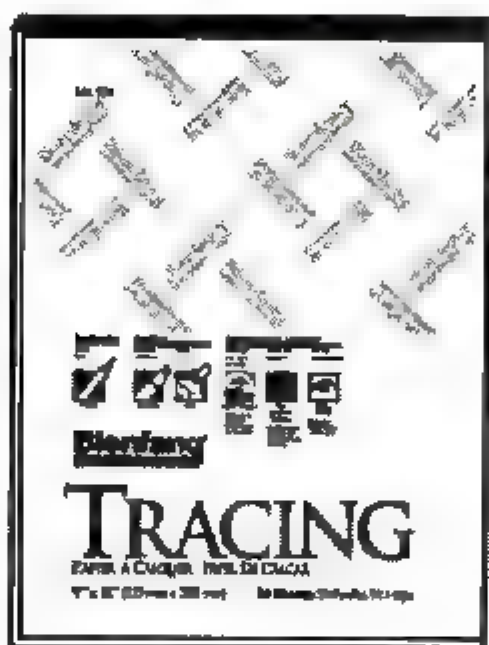Natural Wood $6.95
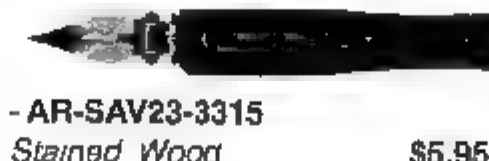
- AR-SAV23-3315
Stained Wood $5.95

- AR-SAV23-7002BL
Student Pen Holder - Blue $3.95
-AR-SAV23-7002GR
Student Pen Holder - Green $3.95
-AR-SAV23-7002NA
Student Pen Holder –Natural $3.95
- AR-SAV23-7002RD
Student Pen Holder - Red $3.95

• Tracing Paper
The 504 Tracing Paper has excellent transparency and tooth. It is used for rough sketches and overlays. Fine surface is ideal for pencil, markers and inks.
- AR-HUN-243-123 (9"x12") 50 Sheets $4.95
- AR-HUN-243-131 (11"x14") 50 Sheets $6.95
- AR-HUN-243-143 (14"x17") 50 Sheets $9.95
- AR-HUN0243-163 (19"x24") 50 Sheets $17.95

FABER-CASTELL 4 PEN SET
Set includes 4 nibs. S, F, M, and brush
-AR-FC167100
SRP $9.00

PENCILS & QUILL PENS
• Non-Photo Blue Pencil
Makes marks not appear when artwork is reproduced. Very useful.
- AR-761-5 Non-photo Blue Pencil $.60

• Quill Inking Pen
Quill Pens offers super-fine flexible point
- AR-H9432 Quill Inking Pen #102 (Tip & Holder) $3.25
- AR-H9402 12 Crow Quill #102 Tips (Inking Pen Nibs only) $13.95

ERASERS
• Kneaded Eraser
Gray soft bendable eraser used for pencil and charcoal.
- AR-1224 Kneaded Rubber Eraser Large $1.15

• Eraser Pencils
Peel off wrap ideal for detail erasing.
- AR-400 Eraser Pencils $1.15
• Erasing Shield
Metal shield with different sizes and shapes
- AR-FT-5370 Erasing Shield $1.10

PENCIL SHARPNER
Canister Sharpener offers metal blades with high impact plastic container
- AR-MR906 Canister Sharper $3.95

• ALVIN PENSTIX
Graphic waterproof drawing pen offering India Ink density. Black permanent drawing ink
- AR-4013-EEF 0.3mm $1.55
- AR-4017-F 0.7mm $1.55
- AR-4015-EF 0.5mm $1.55
• Penstix Set
Includes all 3 Penstix Sizes
- AR-4033 .3mm, 7mm, 5mm $4.45

• SAKURA PIGMA BRUSH
Archival performance with flexible brush style nib. Very fine lines or broad strokes. Water/chem. proof + fade resistant.
- AR-XSDK BR-49 Black $3.00

• Sakura Pigma Micron
Available in six point sizes. Waterproof, chemical proof and fade resistant and will not smear or feather when dry.
-AR-XSK005-49 20mm black $2.95
-AR-XSK01-49 25mm, black $2.95
-AR-XSK02-49 30mm, black $2.95
-AR-XSK03-49 35mm, black $2.95
-AR-XSK05-49 45mm, black $2.95
-AR-XSK08-49 50mm, black $2.95
-AR-30061 3-pk, 25, 35, 45 $8.00
-AR-30062 All sizes, black $16.00

KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH PENS
Rapidograph Pens are made of impact and chemical-resistant components for drawing and specialty inks. Good balance and self-polishing stainless steel points. (Tech Pens)
-AR-3165-06/0 Size 6x0 (.13mm) $27.00
-AR-3165-04/0 Size 4x0 (.18mm) $27.00
-AR-3165-03/0 TSize 3x0 (.25mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-02/0 Size 2x0 (.3mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-01/0 Size #0 (.35mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-01 Size #1 (.5mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-02 Size #2 (.6mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-03 Size #3 (.8mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-04 Size #4 (1mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-06 Size #6 (1.4mm) $22.00
-AR-3165-07 Size #7 (2mm) $22.00

• Magic-Rub Eraser
Eraser especially developed for sensitive surfaces, will not mark of smudge.
-AR-1954FC-1 Magic-Rub Eraser $.95

• Pentel Clic
Pen style holder, retract as needed.
- AR-ZE-21C Pentel Clic Eraser/ Holder $1.95
- AR-ZER-2 Pentel Refill Erasers $1.75

Mars Plastic Eraser
- AR-STD526-50 $1.00

• Penstix Drawing/Sketching Markers
Offers maximum India drawing ink like density. Black waterproof permanent ink
- AR-3013-EEF 0.3mm ExEx Fine $1.55
- AR-3015-EF 0.5mm Ex Fine $1.55
- AR-3017-F 0.7mm Fine $1.55
• Pentrix Drawing/Sketching Marker Set
Set of all 3 sizes.
- AR-3033 Set of 3 .3, .5, .7 mm $4.45

ALVIN DRAWING PEN/ MARKERS
• Tech-Liner Super Point Drawing Pen/Markers
Permanent waterproof ink that dries instantly. Nibs set in stainless steel sleeves for protection.
- AR-TL01 0.1mm $1.95
- AR-TL02 0.2mm $1.95
- AR-TL03 0.3mm $1.95
- AR-TL04 0.4mm $1.95
- AR-TL05 0.5mm $1.95

Tech-Liner Super Point Drawing Pen/Markers Sets
- AR-TLP5 set of 5 All above $9.50
- AR-TLP3 set-3 (.1, .3,.5mm) $5.75

MECHANICAL PENCIL

Berol Mechanical Pencil is precision made w/button lead release and light aluminum barrel.
- Mechanical Pencil 2mm.
- *AR-BP10C* $8 95
- 12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. HB
- *AR-BP2375-HB* $10 50
- 12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. 2H
- *AR-BP2375-2H* $10 50
- 12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. 2B
- *AR-SA02253-2B* $10 50
- 12-Non-Photo Blue Leads-2mm.
- *AR-BP2376-NPB* $10 50

• Mechanical Pencil Sharpener
Provides professional point for standard leads
- *AR-BP14C* Pencil Shapener (Mech. Pencil) $10 75
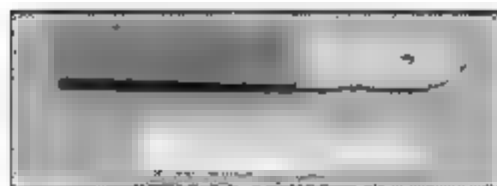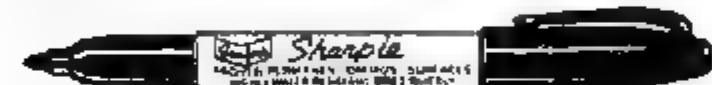
• Sandpaper Pointer
Ideal for pointing pencils, leads, charcoal and crayons by hand
- *AR-3435-1* Sandpaper Pointer $ 95
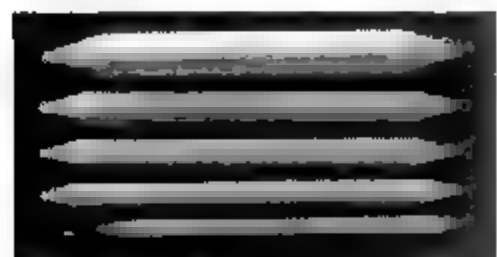
• Blending Stumps
Soft paper felt with double pointed ends used for blending charcoal, pastels, etc Use sandpaper to repoint
- *AR-T811-1* ¼" x 5 ¼" $ 50
- *AR-T812-1* 5/16" x 6" $ 75
- *AR-T813-1* 13/32" x 6" $1 00
- *AR-T814-1* 15/32" x 6" $1 25
- *AR-T817-1* 5/8" x 6" $1 50

• SHARPIE MARKERS
Permanent markers with high intensity ink. Quick drying
- *AR-SA37101* Ultr-Fine Black $1 30
- *AR-SA35101* Ex-Fine Black $1 30
- *AR-SA30101* Regular Black $1 30
- *AR-SA33101* Super Sharpie $1 95
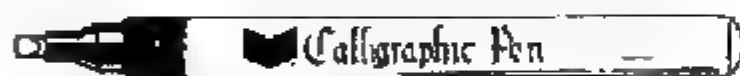
• METALLIC PENS
Offers high quality metallic ink Great for autographs.
- *AR-SA46115* Gold Pen $4 50
- *AR-SA46120* Silver Pen $4 50

• WORKABLE FIXATIF *(Krylon)*
Provides lasting protection. Prevents smudging, dusting and wrinkling.
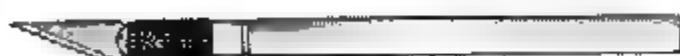- *AR-KR1306* $8 95

• CHINA MARKING PENCILS
Offers moisture resistant, non-toxic odor-free pigments. Self Sharpening. Offered as a dozen or singles.

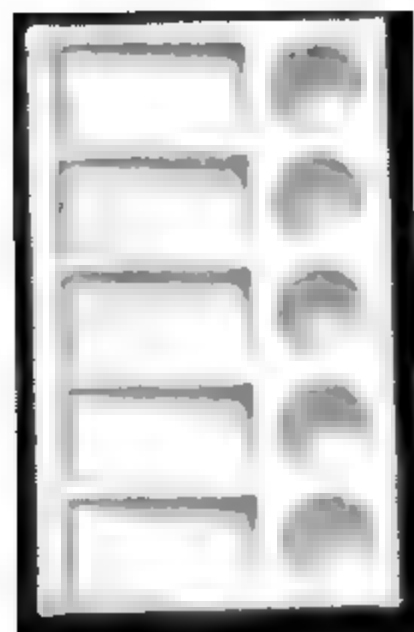|	
AR-173T Dozen Black	$10 75
AR 173T-1 Single Black	$ 95
AR-164T Dozen White	$10 75
AR-164T-1 Single White	$ 95

• DRAFTSMAN BRUSH
Removes shavings from paper. Cleaning without fear of smudging.
- Draftsman Brush (cleaning paper)
- *AR-FT5391* $6 00

XACTO KNIFE
Rubberized barrel. Rear-release mechanism with safety cap
- Xacto Knife
- *AR-XA3626* $5.25
Xacto Refill Blades #1
- *AR-OLKB* $6.50

• Palette Tray
7" by 5" plastic tray works excellent for holding inks.
AR-CW161 SRP $1 95

RUBBER CEMENT
Contact adhesive for paste-up and other graphic art uses.
- Rubber Cement 4oz.
- *AR-BT138* $3 50
- Rubber Cement Quart
- *AR-BT102* $13 25
- Rubber Cement Thinner Pint
- *AR-BT201* $8 50
- Rubber Cement Pick-Up (eraser)
- *AR-BT700* $1 50

BEST-TEST "PIK-UP"

T-SQUARES
• Plastic T-squares
offering flexible plastic with both metric and standard measurements
- *AR-HX02* Plastic 12" $3 95
- *AR-NBA18* Plastic 18" $7 95
- *AR-NBA24* Plastic 24" $10 95

• Aluminum T-squares
offering hard tempered aluminum blade riveted to a rugged plastic head
- *AR-FR63-112* Alum 12" $10 95
- *AR-FR63-118* Alum 18" $12 95
- *AR-FR63-124* Alum 24" $13 95
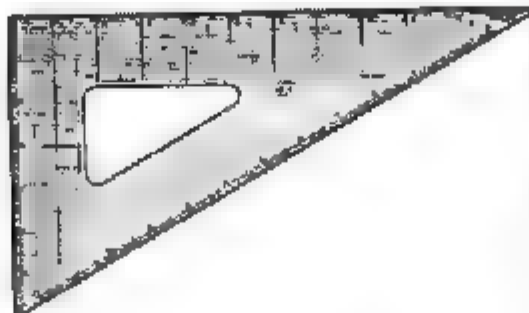
TRIANGLES
*High quality triangles made of .060" acrylic Raised inking edges. Great for Inkers*
- 30" x 60"W/ Inking Edge
- *AR-1204-60* Triangle - 30"x60" 4 inch $3 50
- *AR-1206-60* Triangle - 30"x60" 6 inch $4 50
- *AR-1208-60* Triangle 30"x60" 8 inch $5 50
- *AR-1210-60* Triangle 30"x60" 10 inch $6 50
- *AR-1212-60* Triangle - 30" x60" 12 inch $8 50
- *AR-1214-60* Triangle - 30" x60" 14 inch $10 50

- 45" X 90"W/ Inking Edge
- *AR-1204-45* Triangle - 45"x90" 4 inch $4 50
- *AR-1206-45* Triangle - 45"x90" 6 inch $5 50
- *AR-1208-45* Triangle - 45"x90" 8 inch $7 50
- *AR-1210-45* Triangle - 45"x90" 10 inch $9 50
- *AR-1212-45* Triangle - 45"x90" 12 inch $13 50

COMPASS SET
Geometry set includes ruler compass, two triangles, protractor, eraser, and sharpener.
- 8-piece Geometry Set
- *AR-HX18807* $4.95
- 8-Piece Geometry Set *(brass compass)*
- *AR-723405* $7 95
- Basic Geometry Set
4-piece Geometry Set (Ruler 12", protractor, 30/60 + 45/90 triangles)
- *AR-FL03* $5 95
- Basic Combination Compass
6-piece compass set side-screw bow compass, knee joint compass, extension bar, spare leads, 2" divider point and a lead pointer.
- *AR-S61* Set $15 95
- Compass Set
6-piece drawing set contains: Small side screw compass, 5 ½" self centering knee joint compass/divider, extension bar, technical pen adapter, divider point and lead pointer
- *ARHLX01330-01330* Set $16.95
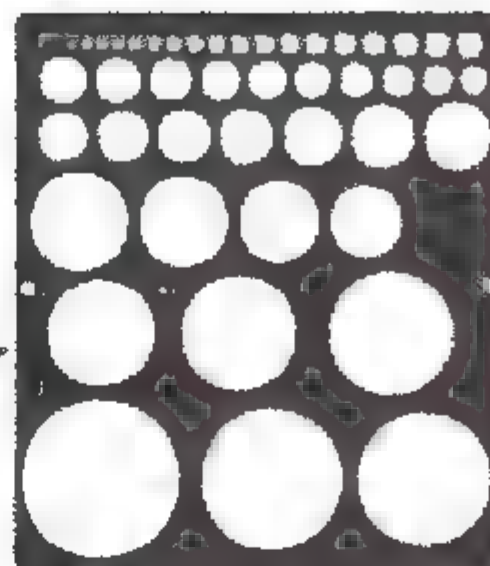
CIRCLE TEMPLATES / FRENCH CURVES / ELLIPSE TEMPLATES
• Circle Templates
Metric and standard Risers for smear-free drawing (Great for Inkers)
- Large Circles
- *AR-13001* $7 95
- Extra Large Circles
- *AR-13011* $6 95

• French Curves (Inking Edge)
- *AR-9000* Set $6 95
• Ellipse Temps.
- *AR-PK12691* $12 00
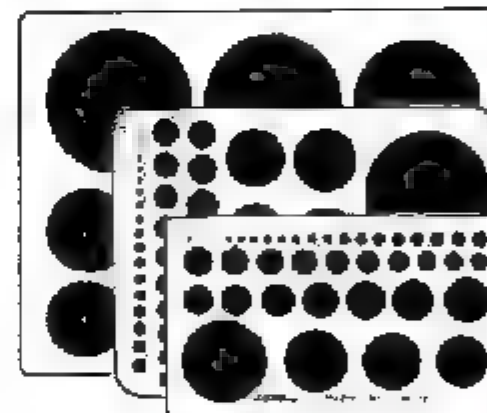
• Circle Templates Set of 3
This set of 3 templates provides ninety-eight different circles and edge scales in 50th 16th and 10th as well as mm and centering lines Sizes ranging from 1/32 inches to 3 ½ inches
- ITEM #AR-TD404 SRP $17 95

• Ellipse Tempate
- *AR-PK12691* $12.00

Brush Box
This 12" by 4" by 1 ½" sturdy wooden box protects your valuable brushes and pens.
AR-YK23000 SRP $$7 95
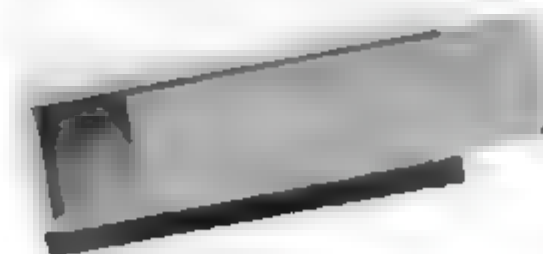
RULERS
• Stainless Steel Rulers
offering flexible steel with non-skid cork backing
- *AR-200-12* Steel Ruler 12 inch Cork Backing $5 95
- *AR-200-18* Steel Ruler 18 inch Cork Backing $6.95
• Plastic Ruler
1 inch with 1/16" markings and metric markings
- *AR-C36* Ruler 12" (plastic ruler) $1.25
- *AR-18* Ruler 6" (plastic ruler) $ .50
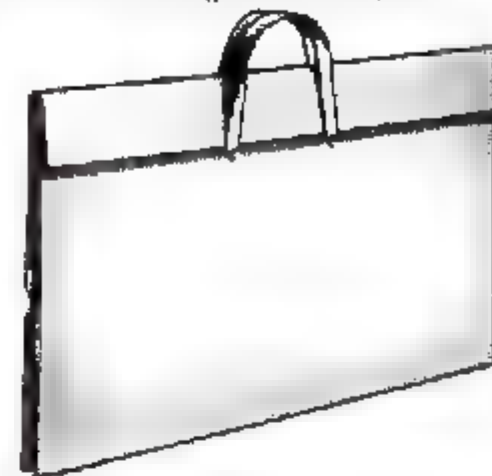
• POCKET PORTFOLIO
- *AR-FL419WH* Pocket Portfolio 14 x 20 $10.50

STORAGE BOXES
• Sketch Pac
2 sided safe storing box 12 3/8" x 4 ¼" x 1 ¾"
- *AR-6880AB* $12 95
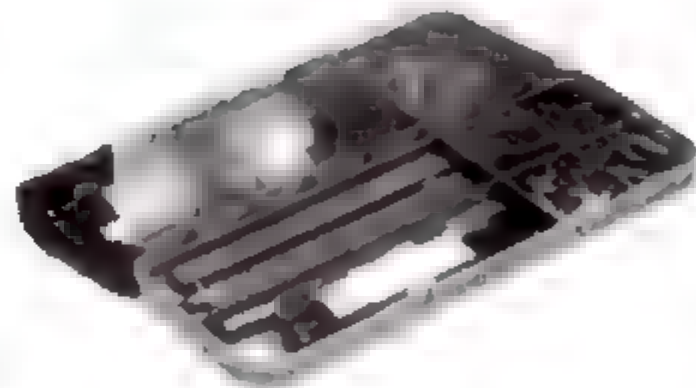
• One Tray Art Bins
13" x 7 ¼" x5 ¾", Elevated tray for viewing of supplies in bottom bin Tight Latch
- *AR-6843AC* black $15.25
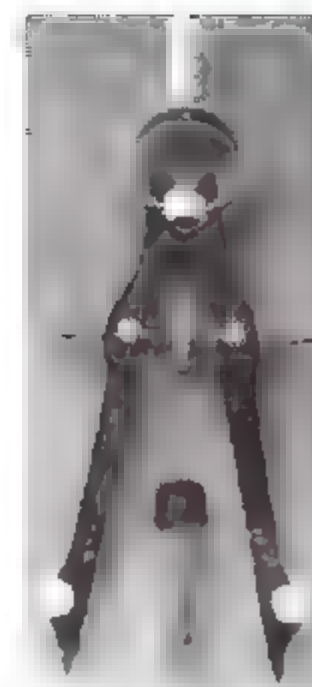
• 5" Bow Compass & Divider
An all metal construction compass with replaceable needle and lead Makes accurate 8" diameter circles Extra pivot point for use as a divider
- *AR-494* 5" Bow Compass $ 4 95
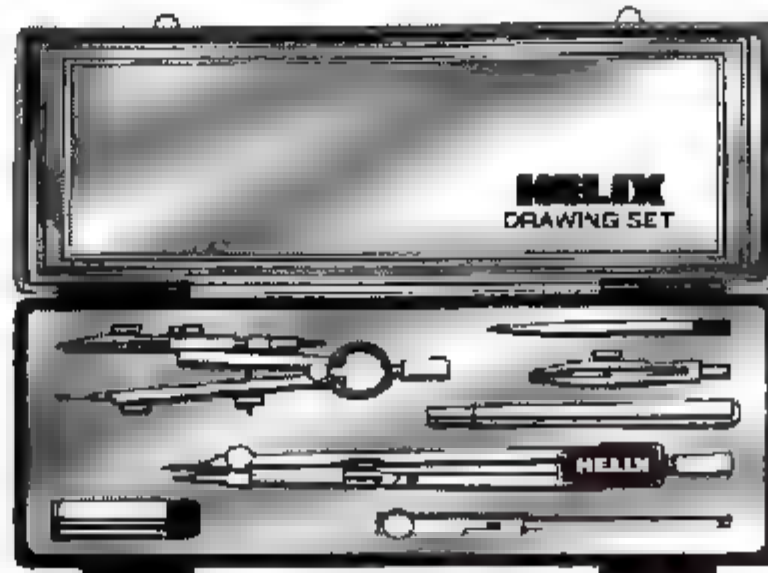
Wooden Mannequins

Great for modeling proportions and poses at any angle. Made from carved hardwood
- **AR-CLY9037** 6" Male
SRP $12.95
- **AR-CLY9036** 6" Female
SRP $12.95
- **AR-CLY9020** 12" Male
SRP $19.95
- **AR-CLY9019** 12" Female
SRP $19.95
- **AR-CLY9042** 20" Male
SRP $29.95

• **12" Unisex Wooden Mannequin**
Human Adult figure mannequin with perfect proportions, adjustable joints for posing. Great for modeling proportions involving angles. Made from carved hardwood, 12" in height
- **AR-CW201** 12" Model   **SRP**
$19.95

• **Hand Mannequins**
Life-like hardwood hand mannequins are fully articulated. Comes in three sizes: male, female and child
- **AR-HM3** 14" Male Hand
SRP $49.95
- **AR-HM4** 12" Female Hand
SRP $46.95
- **AR-HM5** 9" Child Hand
SRP $42.95
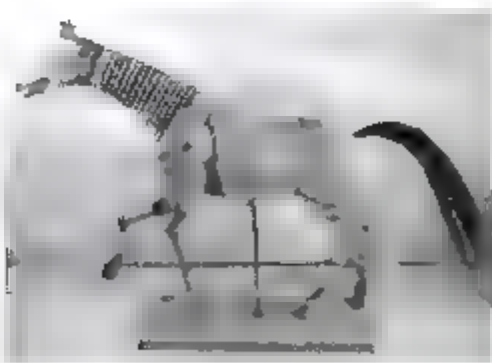
• **12" Horse Wooden Manikan**
- **AR033090410**
SRP $99.00

• **12" Lizard Wooden Mannequin**
- **AR056090440**
SRP $17.99

• **PRESENTATION CASES (PORTFOLIO)**
Spine mounted handle allows pages to hang properly to avoid wrinkling. Features 1" black superior quality rings (Does not snag pages). Includes 10 archival pages (#ZX)
- **AR-S1-2171** 17" x 14"
SRP $68.95
- **AR-S1-2241** 24" x 18"
SRP $110.50
Refill Pages for Presentation Case
- **AR-ZX17** 17" x 14" 10 pack
SRP $23.95
- **AR-ZX24** 24" x 18" 10 pack
SRP $45.95

ELECTRIC ERASER and REFILLS

• **KOH-I-NOOR ELECTRIC ERASER**
Designed to erase both lead and ink from paper and film. Features a heavy-duty, maintenance free 115v motor protected by a high-impact white LEXAN case. Maximum efficiency with either the No. 287 white vinyl strip eraser for paper or the specially formulated no. 285 imbibed yellow strip eraser for film. Includes a No. 287 strip eraser.
- **AR-2800E** All purpose Electric System
SRP $73.95

• **CORDLESS/RECHARGEABLE ERASER**
Contains a trouble-free motor that delivers up to 4,500 rpm, fully charged. Versatile two-way operation—cordless or AC. Long lasting rechargeable battery, break resistant LEXAN case. Lightweight, portable recharging stand power pack, plus a No. 287 vinyl strip eraser
- **AR-2850C** Cordless, Rechargeable   SRP $96.95
• **KOH-I-NOOR ERASER REFILLS**
- **AR-ER285** Yellow, Imbibed ink 10/box   SRP $6.95
- **AR-ER287** Soft Vinyl, pencil 10/box   SRP $5.95

• **LIGHTWEIGHT SKETCH BOARDS**
Made of strong tempered masonite with cutout carry handle. Metal clips and rubber band (included) hold paper securely in place.
- **AR-SB1819** 18 ½" X 19 ½"
SRP $9.95
- **AR-SB2326** 23 ½" X 26"
SRP $12.95

• **ALVIN ELECTRIC ERASER**
Durable, high-quality UL-listed unit. Uses of a full 7" eraser eliminates the annoyance of stopping constantly during heavy workload periods to insert short erasers. Unbreakable LEXAN casing fits the hand comfortably and can be hung by a convenient ring. The heavy duty AC motor eliminates the continual repair problems of typical lightweight erasers. Motor cooling vent locations are designed to allow cool operation even under heaviest workloads
- **AR-EE1754** With slip chuck
SRP $85.00

• **ERASER REFILLS**
- **AR-ER72** 7" dark grey ink 1 doz.
SRP $6.95
- **AR-ER73** 7" white, pencil, 1 doz.
SRP $6.95
- **AR-ER74** 7" pink pencil, 1 doz.
SRP $6.95
- **AR-ER88** 7" white vinyl ink/pencil, 1 doz.
SRP $6.95

Satin-Glow Lightboxes
Great for transferring drawings onto art boards.

- **AR-LB1218** 12" x 18"	$205.00
- **AR-LB1620** 16" x 20"	$325.00
- **AR-LB1824** 18" x 24"	$485.00

• **DISPLAY PORTFOLIOS ARTFOLIOS**
24 pages of acid, pvc, and lignen safe art sleeves. Archival Safe.
- **AR-IA1212** Artfolio Book 11 x 17 w/ 24 shts **SRP $15.95**
(Holds Blue Line Comic Book Art Boards)
- **AR-IA 1214** Artfolio book 14 x 17 w/ 24 shts **SRP $25.95**
(Holds most oversized art boards)
- **AR-IA 128** Artfolio book 8 1/2 x 11 w/ 24 shts **SRP $7.50**

ARCHIEVABLE SAFE SUPPLIES for ORIGINAL ARTWORK

Blue Line Pro now carries B.C.E. archievable-safe supplies. When a portfolio or art sleeve isn't enough to protect your prints, posters, or original artwork, then try Protective Artwork Sheets. These sheets are made of rigid plastic mylar material. In addition, backing boards that easily slide into the slip of the sleeves are available. These sheets come in two different sizes (12 ½" x 18 ½" and 18" x 24") and are available in a multitude of quantities: a perfect fit for most Blue Line Pro comic boards. Be on the look out for more B.C.E supplies in the future from Blue Line Pro.

Mylar Sleeve		Backing Board	
(1) 12 ½" x 18 ½"		(1) 12 ¼" x 18 ¼"	
-AR-BCE70-1	$4.95	-AR-BCE41-1	$1.55
Mylar Sleeve		Backing Board (1)	
(1) 18" x 24"		17 ½" x 23 ½"	
-AR-BCE75-1	$6.00	-AR-BCE42-1	$2.75
Mylar Sleeves		Backing Board	
(10-pack) of 12 ½" x 18 ½"		(10-pack) of 12" x 18"	
-AR-BCE70-10	$40.00	-AR-BCE41-10	$12.40
Mylar Sleeves		Backing Board	
(10-pack) of 18" x 24"		(10-pack) of 17 ½" x 23 ½"	
-AR-BCE75-10	$48.00	-AR-BCE42-10	$19.50
Mylar Sleeves		Backing Board	
(25-pack) of 12 ½" x 18 ½"		(25-pack) of 12" x 18"	
-AR-BCE70-25	$90.00	-AR-BCE41-25	$28.00
Mylar Sleeves		Backing Board	
(25 pack) of 18" x 24"		(25 pack) of 17 ½" x 23 ½"	
-AR-BCE75-25	$115.00	-AR-BCE42-25	$45.50

COMIC BOOK ORIGINAL ART SLEEVES
Protect your original Art Work
• **Comic Book Original Art Sleeves**
11 ½" x 19 Polyethylene (3.0 mil)
- **AR-BAG 1.19-25** 25 Bags $7.50
- **AR-BAG 1.19-100** 100 Bag $25.00
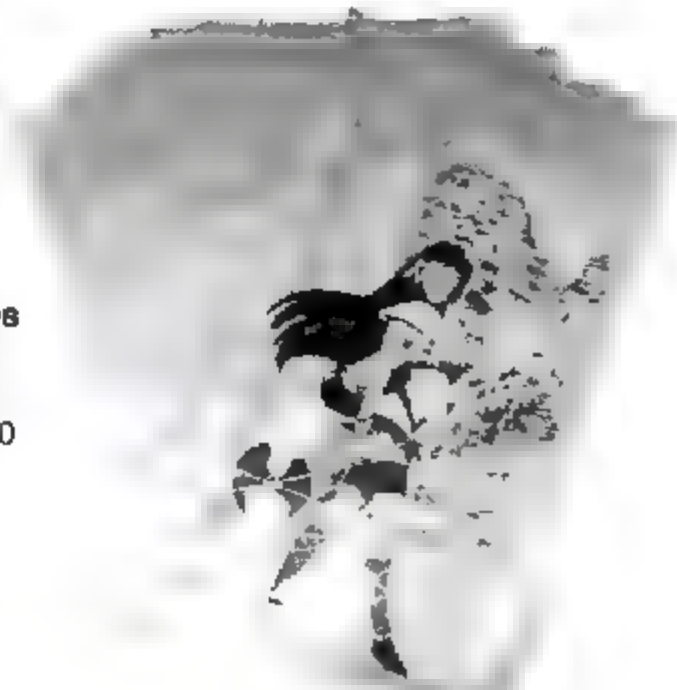
BLUE LINE PRO
COMPUTER SYSTEMS
Exclusively designed for the Computer Artist!

Entry Level Graphics WorkStation
Powerful performance from an Intel Celeron entry-level workstation. Get a solid start with digital graphics, design, publishing and other home computer needs.

Intel Celeron processor up to 2.0GHz. Blazing fast 400MHz FSB and 128 Cache

Starting with a minimum of 128MB memory, 20GB hard drive, CD Rom drive, floppy drive, network connection, 56K modem, sound, video, speakers, keyboard, and mouse. APC surge protection included.

17" Multimedia monitor .23dp x .27dp 110Mhz pixel frequency. Windows XP Home Installed
Starting at $795

Advanced Level Graphics WorkStation
Scalability and advanced Intel Pentium 4 power in a feature rich workstation. Perform professional digital video editing, graphics, design, and engineering.

Intel Pentium 4 processor starting at 1.8GHz. Blazing fast 400 or 533MHz FSB and 256K or 512K Cache.

Starting with a minimum of 512MB memory, 80GB hard drive, CD Rom drive, CDRW/DVD drive, floppy drive, network connection. 56K modem, sound, video, stereo speaker system, keyboard, and mouse. APC surge suppression included.

17" Multimedia monitor .23dp x .27dp 110Mhz pixel frequency. Windows XP Home Installed
Starting at $1559

Professional Series Graphic Artist Machine
Extreme performance and scalability with the advanced Intel Pentium 4 processor. The high level performance to drive digital video editing, 3D graphics rendering, CAD/CAM design, and other resource demanding workstation applications. (Dual processor workstations available)

Intel Pentium 4 processor starting at 2.26GHz. Blazing fast 533MHz FSB and 512K Cache.

Starting with a minimum of 1GB memory, Dual 120GB hard drives, CD Rom drive, DVD+RW drive, floppy drive, GeForce Video w/128MB, network connection, 56K modem, sound, surround sound speaker system, keyboard, and mouse. APC UPS power backup included.
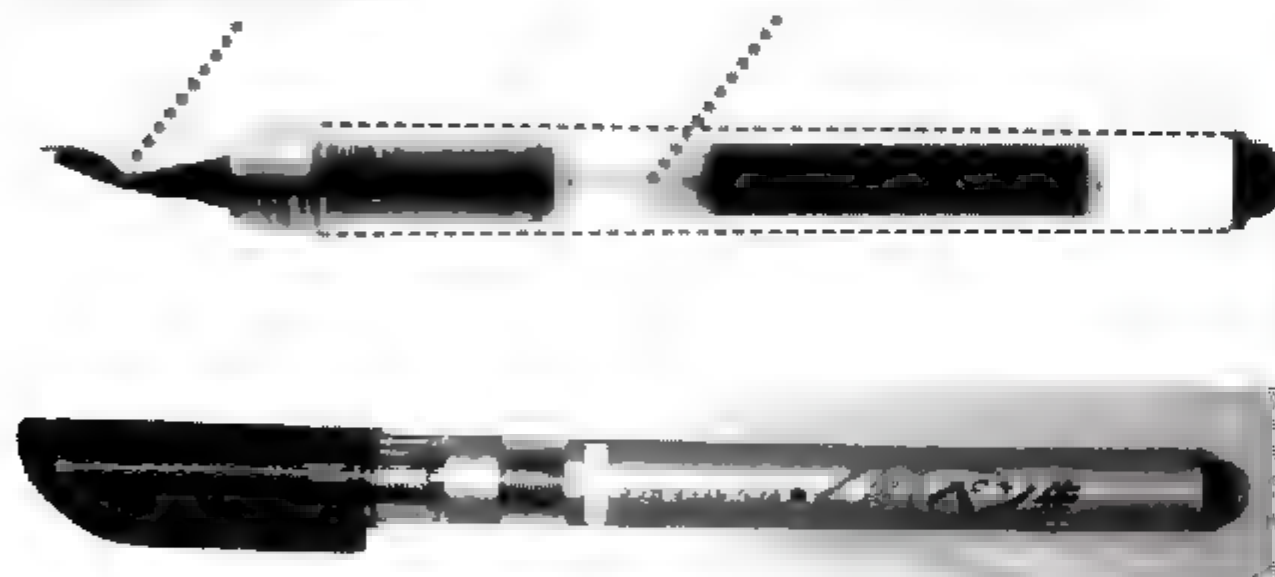
19" Multimedia monitor 200 Mhz pixel frequency Windows XP Home Installed
Starting at $3325

Hardware is constantly changing. As better equipment becomes available, the systems as stated will be upgraded automatically. For exact system specifications, please contact us

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SMOOTH NIB, SUPERIOR INK FLOW

CARTRIDGE FILLING SYSTEM

Software...

TACHIKAWA
NEW MANGA PEN
All the way from Japan the Manga Fountain Pen from Tachikawa is an incredible new art pen that will revolutionize inking as we know it! The fountain pen quality makes this a precision instrument featuring a chromium-plated stainless steel 0.2mm nib making it impervious to rust or corrosion. In addition the waterproof black ink is fed through a sophisticated cartridge filler system that resists the usual cartridge-based problem of ink flow and skipping (dry start when the pen touches paper). This pen is the superior choice for the discriminating manga or comic artist. The key is in the simple and elegant design.
-ARIC-302834   **$4.95**

**TACHIKAWA NEW MANGA PEN
CARTRIDGE REFILLS**
(2-pack)
-ARIC-NC208   **$2.95**

■ 50 example art images are included with an event option that lets the viewer see how they were made
■ Watercolors, ink brush, air brush   the pen tools features many types of effects
■ The CG-Illust website is full of artwork
■ All the tools you need to create 2D artwork at this reasonable price!
■ Poster or card making is easy with the font tool!
■ High resolution allows for top quality print outs
■ Images can be saved in BMP and JPEG formats
■ Great for creating images for a homepage

Compatible with a scanner or digital camera.

Extensive print setup.

Compatible with pressure sensitive tablets

Deleter DG Illust version 2
50 example art images are included with an event option that lets the viewer see how they were made. Watercolors, ink brush, air brush,etc the pen tools features many types of effects. All the tools you need to create 2D artwork at htis reasonable price Poster or card making is easy with the font too.. High resolution allows for top quality print outs. Images can be saved in BMP or JPEG formats Easy to use tools

-SWDELCG2   **$79.95**
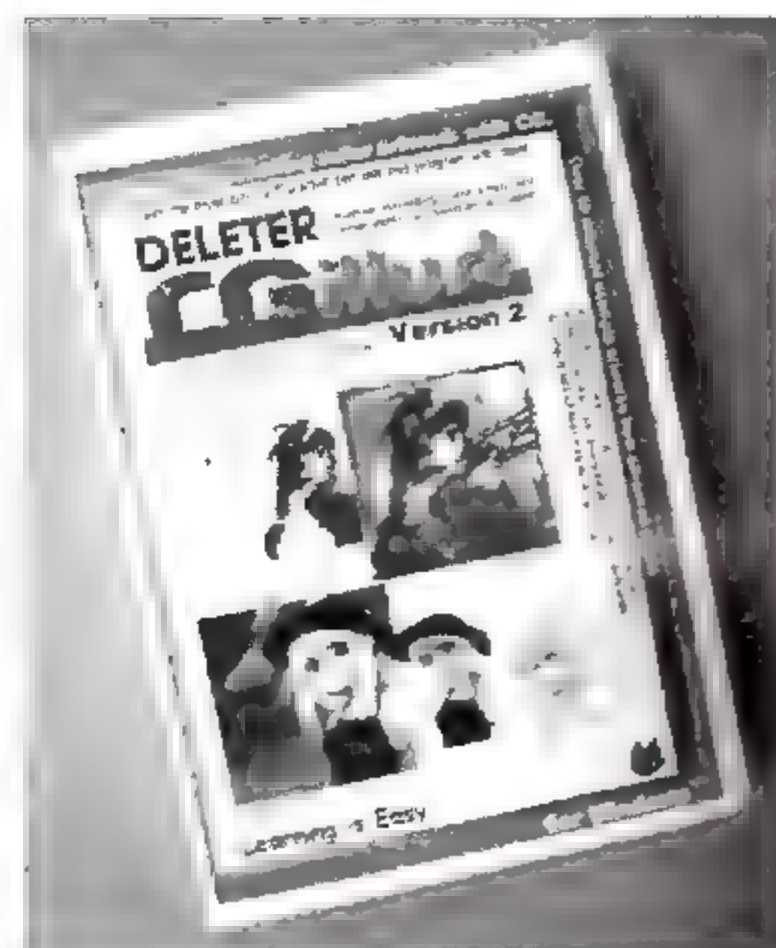
COPIC MARKERS, AIR MARKERS, TONES, REFILLS

COPIC Markers have been widely used in Europe and Asia where their coloring qualities go hand in hand with the style we know as manga. Their versatility and variety lends itself to the imagination of the creator and gives him or her options for their creative style. The standard square designed COPIC marker is double-ended and fast drying. COPICs have been specially formulated with a toner designed not to dissolve making them able to work directly onto photocopied surfaces and provide clear unblemished color. One of the best parts about COPIC markers is their refillable ink and replaceable nib features.

• SINGLE BASIC MARKERS
- $4.95 each
All Single Colors Available on-line at www.bluelinepro.com or call 859-282-0096

• COPIC MARKER SETS
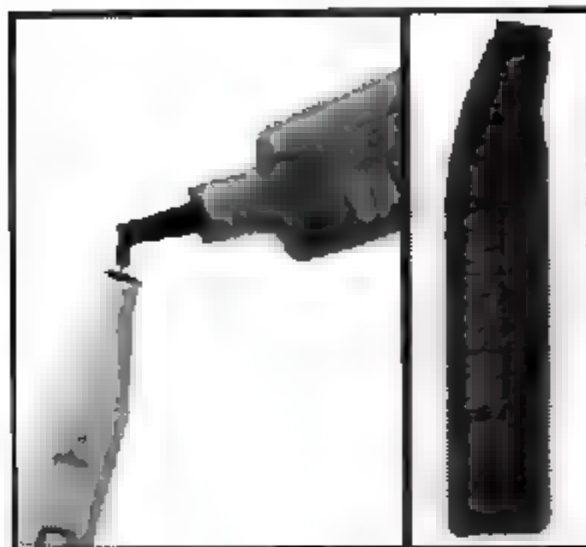|		
AR-COP110	COPIC 12 Basic	$59.40
AR-COP112	COPIC 12 PCS NG	$59.40
AR-COP114	COPIC 12 PCS TG	$59.40
AR-COP116	COPIC 12 PCS WG	$59.40
AR-COP118	COPIC 12 PCS CG	$59.40
AR-COP120	COPIC 36 Color Set	$178.20
AR-COP140	Copic 72 Color Set A	$356.40
AR-COP150	Copic 72 Color Set B	$356.40
AR-COP155	Copic 72 Color Set C	$356.40
AR-COP160	Copic Empty Marker	$3.60

• COPIC Various Ink (Refills) $5.95
200 SERIES One of the best parts about COPIC markers standard and sketch is their refillable ink feature. No more tossing out dried out markers. Just fill it back up again and you're ready to go. Refills can be used up six times. This refillable feature gives you the opportunity to make your own color though mixing inks, creating an original color all your own

All Single Colors Available on-line at www.bluelinepro.com or call 859-282-0096

AR-COP210	Var Ink Colorless Blender	$3.75
AR-COP220	Var Colorless Blender200c	$9.75
AR-COP230	Var Ink Empty Bottle	$2.65

• REFILL BOOSTER PACK
AR-COP-BOOSTER 3-caps w/needles $4.95

Colorless Blender

• Replacable Marker Nibs $4.20
Another great feature about COPIC makers is there interchangeable nibs. From broad to calligraphy - provide greater freedom of technique in your renderings. COPIC Nibs deliver clear vibrant color on photocopied surfaces as well as glass plastics and metals. The nibs are made of strong but flexible polyester for smooth consistent application. Nibs come in a pack of 10 except for the brush variety that comes in a pack of three.

AR-COP300	Standard Broad	$4.20
AR-COP310	Soft Broad	$4.20
AR-COP320	Round	$4.20
AR-COP330	Calligraphy 5mm	$4.20
AR-COP340	Brush	$4.20
AR-COP350	Standard Fine	$4.20
AR-COP360	Super Fine	$4.20
AR-COP370	Semi Broad	$4.20
AR-COP380	Calligraphy 3mm	$4.20
AR-COP365	Sketch Nib Super	$4.20
AR-COP90	Sketch Nib Med	$4.20
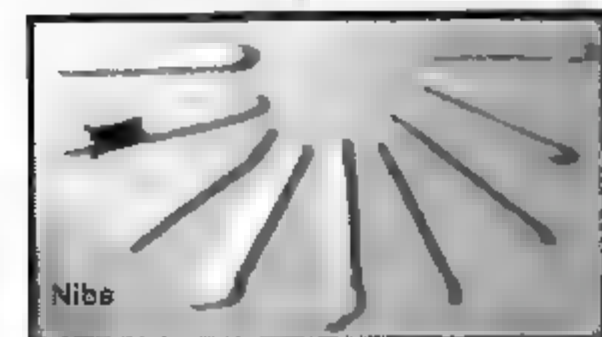
Nibs

• 400 Copic Tweezer $4.20
Our special COPIC Tweezers give you an easy no-mess nib change that gets you drawing again in minutes. Being able to change nibs quickly helps you keep up with the most demanding marker techniques.
AR-COP400 Tweezer $4.20

• SINGLE SKETCH MARKERS $4.95
The oval designed Sketch COPIC marker is double-ended and is fast drying. COPICs have been specially formulated with a toner designed not to dissolve making them able to work directly onto photocopied surfaces and provide clear unblemished color. COPIC Sketch markers' oval body profile gives you a feel of a fast flowing experience in your hands. It paints as well as it draws. They come with a broad nib and a brush like nib, available in medium + broad and super brush making them great for delicate or bold expression (from fashion and graphics to textiles and fine arts lettering/calligraphy). COPIC sketch markers are available in 286 colors. One of the best parts about COPIC markers is their refillable ink and replaceable nib features.

• Single COPIC SKETCH Markers $4.95
All Single Colors Available on-line at www.bluelinepro.com or call 859-282-0096

AR-COP450	Colorless Blender	$4.20
AR-COP45100	Back	$4.20
AR-COP45110	Special Black	$4.20
AR-COP452	Sketch 12 Basic Set	$59.40
AR-COP454	Sketch 36 Basic Set	$178.20
AR-COP456	Sketch 72 set A	$356.40
AR-COP458	Sketch 72 Set B	$356.40
AR-COP460	Sketch 72 Set C	$356.40
AR-COP462	Sketch 72 Set D	$356.40
AR-COP95	Empty sketch marker	$3.60

• 500 Copic Opaque White $9.75
COPIC Opaque White is a water based white pigment used for highlight effects. It won't bleed into the base color so it gives sharp line definition and can be used on watercolor as well as other permanent ink surfaces.
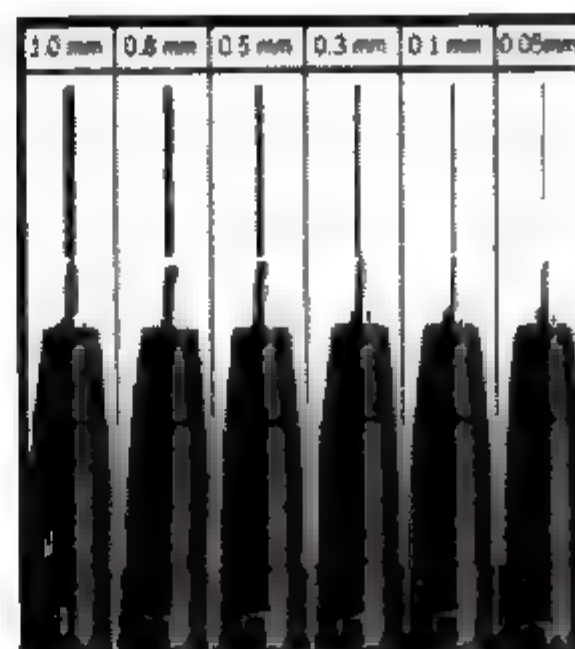AR-COP500 Opaque White $9.75

• COPIC PAPERS
AR-COP510	Copic Alcohol Marker Pad A4	$9.95
AR-COP520	Copic Alcohol Marker Pad B4	$19.95
AR-COP530	Manga Manuscript Paper A4	$6.95
AR-COP540	Manga Manuscript Paper B4	$9.95

• MARKER STORAGE
AR-COP550	72 pc Wire Stand	$59.95
AR-COP560	36 pc Block Stand	$29.95

• COPIC's MULTI LINERS drawing pens
allow drawing without annoying running ink. They are available in pens and brush. The pens come in a wide range of line widths (from .05 to 1.0 mm) while the brushes come in three different sizes: small medium and large

• MULTILINERS SINGLES
AR-COP600	Multiliner 05	$2.50
AR-COP610	Multiliner 01	$2.50
AR-COP620	Multiliner 03	$2.50
AR-COP630	Multiliner 05	$2.50
AR-COP640	Multiliner 08	$2.50
AR-COP650	Multiliner 10	$2.50
AR-COP660	Multiliner Brush M	$2.95
AR-COP670	Multiliner Brush S	$2.95
AR-COP671	Sepia,ML 05	$2.50
AR-COP672	Sepia,ML 1	$2.50
AR-COP673	Sepia,ML 3	$2.50
AR-COP674	Grey,ML 05	$2.50
AR-COP675	Grey,ML 1	$2.50
AR-COP676	Grey,ML 3	$2.50
• SETS
AR-COP680	Multiliner Set A	$15.00
AR-COP690	Multiliner Set B	$20.00

COPIC Air Marker

AIR MARKERS
• 705 ABS-1 Kit
ABS-1 Kit. COPIC Markers can be used as an airbrush by inserting the broad top end of the pen into our uniquely designed adapter. The Airbrush feature is wonderful for creating backgrounds and filling in larger areas of space. The Airbrush tool creates little or no mess and allows for nearly instant change in color. It's simple to use - just attach one end of the COPIC Airbrush hose to a standard airbrush compressor and the other to the COPIC Airbrush adapter and you're ready to go. A compressed air can that attaches directly to the COPIC Airbrush adapter is available for portability. This is the airbrush ABS-1 Kit. It comes with 1. Air Grip (where the pen goes in) 2. The air adapter (where the empty canister that the air grip screws on to. This canister is just a reservoir, it does not contain air) 3. The airhose (this connects from the bottom of the air adapter to the top of the aircan.) 4. The aircan 80 5. The air can holder (a foam square with 3 holes in it so that you can stand the different sizes of

aircans.) This kit has all of the components in it for someone who would like to have portability but have to option to connect it to a compressor.

AR-COP705 ABS-1 Kit $60.95

• 710 Starting Set ABS-2
Set ABS-2 COPIC Markers can be used as an airbrush by inserting the broad top end of the pen into our uniquely designed adapter. The Airbrush feature is wonderful for creating backgrounds and filling in larger areas of space. The Airbrush tool creates little or no mess and allows for nearly instant change in color. It's simple to use - just attach one end of the COPIC Airbrush hose to a standard airbrush compressor and the other to the COPIC Airbrush adapter and you're ready to go. A compressed air can that attaches directly to the COPIC Airbrush adapter is available for portability. This is the portable version of our airbrush system. The ABS-2 Kit comes with a D-60 can of compressed air and the Airgrip. This item is great for the artist on the move ONLY the D-60 aircan can be attached directly to the air grip because of some special tubing inside the can. The other sizes of aircans 80 and 180 have to be attached to the hose and then to the air adapter. They hold more air but are not so portable.

AR-COP710	Starting Set ABS-2	$26.50
AR-COP720	Starting Set ABS-3	$28.50
AR-COP730	Airgrip	$17.10
AR-COP740	Air Adapter	$11.40
AR-COP750	Airhose 1/4 to 1/8	$21.50
AR-COP755	Airhose 1/8 to 1/8	$21.50
AR-COP760	Air Can D-60	$8.95
AR-COP763	Air Can 80	$10.95
AR-COP765	Air Can 180	$12.95
AR-COP770	Air Compressor	$186.50

NX Kits
AR-COP910 NX Kit 3 $20.00
Starter kit to learn how to use color effects and techniques. Practice Sheets and a Color Guide are included.
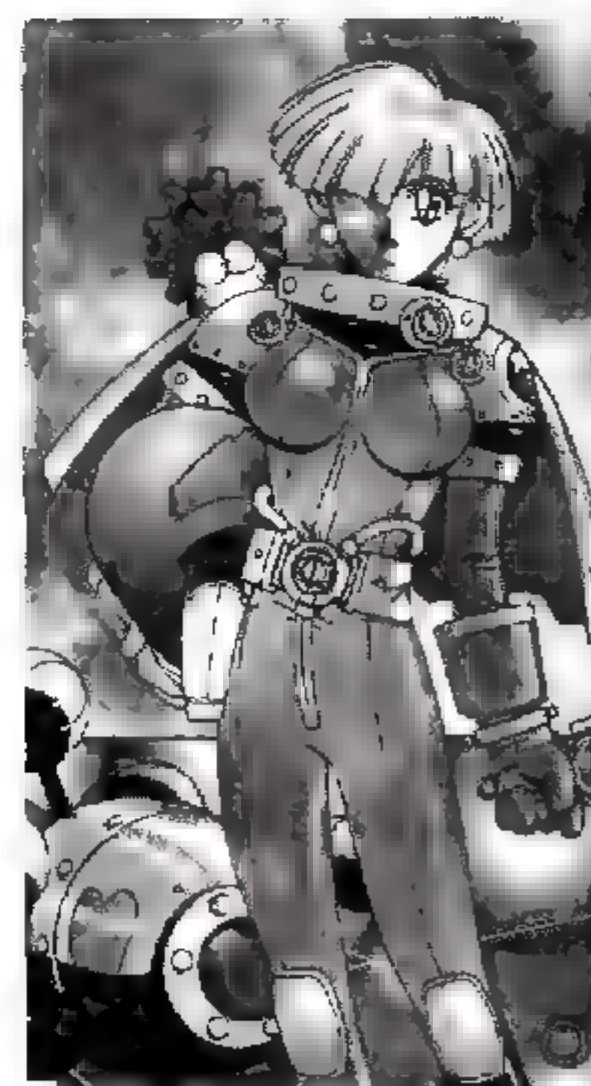
ZIP-TONES
.Too Professional Tone $5.00 per sht.
(See the website for over 20 different types and styles of tones.)
Copics very own cut and stick Zip-Tone.

Go to
www.bluelinepro.com
to see additional
Copic Art Supplies!

DELETER Manga Kits - Markers - Papers - Inks - Whiteout - Art Tools

For the serious How To Draw fan, the Deleter line of products is here for you. The Deleter line includes color overlays, screens, or screens, gradations, inking accessories, and the highly prized Neopiko line of alcohol based, double tipped markers. Give them a try today!

Deleter Inking Accessories
• Pen (Nib) Holder
You can use this for all Maru-pens, G-pens, Aaji-pens (Tama-pen).
AR-DEL3411003 $3.95

• G-Pen Inking Nib (3pcs)
G-pen is very elastic and drawing main lines or flash line.
AR-DEL3411004
$2.95

• Maru-Pen Inking Nib (2pcs)
Maru-pen is good for drawing details.
AR-DEL-3411002 $2.50
• Saji-Pen Inking Nib (10pcs)
Saji-pen is smooth and easy to draw all kinds of lines.
AR-DEL3411007 $6.95

• Saji-Pen Inking Nib (3pcs)
Saji-pen is smooth and easy to draw all kinds of lines.
AR-DEL3411006
$3.95

DELETER INKS
• Deleter Black 1
Works well drawing lines and painting
AR-DEL3410001 $4.95
• Deleter Black 2
Permanent ink, can not be removed with an eraser
AR-DEL3410003 $4.95
• Deleter Black 3
Completely waterproof with mat finish.
AR-DEL 3410004 $4.95

• Deleter White 1
Great for touch ups and white details.
AR-DEL 3410002 $4.95
• Deleter White 2
Great for touch ups and white details. Waterproof.
AR-DEL 3410006 $4.95

Deleter Neopiko Line Pen
A super dark alcohol marker-type line drawing pen
• **AR-DEL3115005** Neopiko Line 05
• **AR-DEL3115010** Neopiko Line 1
• **AR-DEL3115020** Neopiko Line 2
• **AR-DEL3115030** Neopiko Line 3
• **AR-DEL3115050** Neopiko Line 5
• **AR-DEL3115080** Neopiko Line 8
• **AR-DEL3115100** Neopiko Line 1.0
Neopiko Line Pen each   **$2.50**

NEOPIKO MARKERS
Neopiko markers are alcohol-based markers that are great for diffusion effects. Their dark colors contrast sharply with the whiteness of paper making beautiful lines and clear vibrant colors. Great for coloring illustrations and comics. These 144 different colored markers are available in sets. (Note: Color Codes identifies the colors in that set. Consult the Color Key.)

• Neopiko Marker S1 Set Starter Set
36 markers, 35 colors
-**AR-DEL311-0201** $84.95
• Neopiko Marker 36A Set
36 - colors Coffee, Ivory, Blush Pink, Powder Pink, Light Brown, Ocher Beige, Naples Yellow, Light Orange, Pink Beige, Apricot, Beige, Sun Tan, Anise, Sweet Pink, Orchid, Pastel Blue, Celadon, Celery White lilly, Opal Green, Pale Violet, Mauvette, Saxe Blue, Pale Sky, Sepia, Garnet, Old Rose, Cobalt Blue, Periwinkle, Ever Green, Elm Green, Holly Green, Eggplant, Violet, Pumpkin, Cocoa Brown.
-**AR-DEL-311-0203** $84.95
• Neopiko Marker 36B Set
36 - colors Primrose, Yellow, Marigold, Ice Blue, Light Aqua, Carmine, Raspberry, Lettuce Green, Peony, Light Purple, Ice Green, Mint Green, Lemon Yellow, Brilliant Yellow, Cerulean Blue, Strawberry, Signal Red, Antique Blue, Grass Green, Bellflower, Scarlet, Magenta, Vivid Pink, Apple Green, Cool Grey 1, Cool Grey 2, Cool Grey 3, Cool Grey 4, Cool Grey 5, Cool Grey 6, Cool Grey 7, Cool Grey 8, Warm Grey 1, Warm Grey 3, Warm Grey 5, Warm Grey 7
-**AR-DEL311-0204** $84.95
• Neopiko Marker 72A Set
72 colors - Pale Pink, Shell Pink, Peach, Coral Pink, Sand, Pastel Peach, Flesh, Salmon Pink, Maize, Sunlight Yellow, Cream, Brown Gold, Terra-cotta, Autumn Leaf, Maroon, Black, Yellow Ochre, Dark Brown, Neutral 1, Neutral 3, Neutral 5, Neutral 7, Neutral 9, Pale Yellow, Pale Lemon, Aqua Green, Baby Blue, Pale Green, Mist Green, Pale mauve, Pale Lilac, Pale Blue, Solvent, Baby Pink, Baby Green, Aqua, Med Blue, Turquoise, Rose Pink, Salvia Blue, Steel Blue, Spring Green, Vivid Yellow, Moss Green, Lavender, Tropical, Dull Pink, Dandelion, Sky Blue, Pink, Tabacco Brown, Vivid Red, Ultramarine, Vivid Green, Olive Green, Iris, Orange, Cherry Pink, Emerald, Peacock Green, Cherry Red, Mustard, Burnt Umber, Crimson, Poppy Red, Oriental Blue, Jungle Green, French Blue, Vermilion, Royal Purple, Viridian.
AR-DEL311-0202 $160.00
• Neopiko Marker 72B Set
72 colors - Coffee, Ivory, Blush Pink, Powder Pink, Light Brown, Ocher Beige, Naples Yellow, Light Orange, Pink Beige, Apricot, Beige, Sun Tan, Anise, Sweet Pink, Orchid, Pastel Blue, Celadon, Celery, White lilly, Opal Green, Pale Violet, Mauvette, Saxe Blue, Pale Sky, Sepia, Garnet, Old Rose, Cobalt Blue, Periwinkle, Ever Green, Elm Green, Holly Green, Eggplant, Violet, Pumpkin, Cocoa Brown, Primrose, Yellow, Marigold, Ice Blue, Light Aqua, Carmine, Raspberry, Lettuce Green, Peony, Light Purple, Ice Green, Mint Green, Lemon Yellow, Brilliant Yellow, Cerulean Blue, Strawberry, Signal Red, Antique Blue, Grass Green, Bellflower, Scarlet, Magenta, Vivid Pink, Apple Green, Cool Grey 1, Cool Grey 2, Cool Grey 3, Cool Grey 4, Cool Grey 5, Cool Grey 6, Cool Grey 7, Cool Grey 8, Warm Grey 1, Warm Grey 3, Warm Grey 5, Warm Grey 7
-**AR-DEL311-0205** $160.00

• Neopiko Marker (Skin Set)
Color Code: T1
12 colors - 12 Color - Pale Pink, Shell Pink, Peach, Coral Pink, Sand, Pastel Peach, Flesh, Salmon Pink, Maize, Sunlight Yellow, Cream.
AR-DEL311-0101 $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Brown & Gray Set)
Color Code: T2
12 colors - Brown Gold, Terra-cotta, Autumn Leaf, Maroon, Black, Yellow Ochre, Dark Brown, Neutral 1, Neutral 3, Neutral 5, Neutral 7, Neutral 9.
-**AR-DEL311-0102** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Pale Color Set)
Color Code T3
12 colors Colors - Pale Yellow, Pale Lemon, Aqua Green, Baby Blue, Pale Green, Mist Green, Pale mauve, Pale Lilac, Pale Blue, Solvent, Baby Pink, Baby Green.
-**AR-DEL311-0103** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Light Color Set)
Color Code: T4
12 colors Colors - Aqua, Med Blue, Turquoise, Rose Pink, Salvia Blue, Steel Blue, Spring Green, Vivid Yellow, Moss Green, Lavender, Tropical, Dull Pink
-**AR-DEL311-0104** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Middle Color Set)
Color Code: T5
12 colors - Dandelion, Sky Blue, Pink, Tabacco Brown, Vivid Red, Ultramarine, Vivid Green, Olive Green, Iris, Orange, Cherry Pink, Emerald.
-**AR-DEL311-0105** $28.95

• Neopiko Marker (Dark Color Set)
Color Code: T6
12 colors - Peacock Green, Cherry Red, Mustard, Burnt Umber, Crimson, Poppy Red, Oriental Blue, Jungle Green, French Blue, Vermilion, Royal Purple, Viridian.
-**AR-DEL311-0106** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Skin Variation Set)
Color Code: T7
12 colors- Coffee, Ivory, Blush Pink, Powder Pink, Light Brown, Ocher Beige, Naples Yellow, Light Orange, Pink Beige, Apricot, Beige, Sun Tan.
-**AR-DEL311-0107** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Super Pale Set)
Color Code: T8
12 colors - Anise, Sweet Pink, Orchid, Pale Blue, Celadon, Celery, White lilly, Opal Green, Pale Violet, Mauvette, Saxe Blue, Pale Sky
-**AR-DEL311-0108** $28.00
• Neopiko Marker (Smokey Color Set)
Color Code T9
12 colors - Sepia, Garnet, Old Rose Cobalt Blue, Periwinkle, Ever Green, Elm Green, Holly Green Eggplant, Violet, Pumpkin, Cocoa Brown
-**AR-DEL311-0109** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Light Variation Set)
Color Code: T10
12 colors - Primrose, Yellow, Marigold, Ice Blue, Light Aqua, Carmine, Raspberry, Lettuce Green, Peony, Light Purple, Ice Green, Mint Green.
-**AR-DEL311-0110** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Middle Variation) Color Code: T11
12 colors - Lemon Yellow, Brilliant Yellow, Cerulean Blue, Strawberry, Signal Red, Antique Blue, Grass Green, Bellflower, Scarlet, Magenta, Vivid Pink, Apple Green
-**AR-DEL311-0111** $28.95
• Neopiko Marker (Gray Variation Set)
Color Code: T12
12 colors - Cool Grey 1, Cool Grey 2, Cool Grey 3, Cool Grey 4, Cool Grey 5, Cool Grey 6, Cool Grey 7, Cool Grey 8, Warm Grey 1, Warm Grey 3, Warm Grey 5, Warm Grey 7
-**AR-DEL311-0112** $28.95

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DELETER COMIC BOOK PAPER
• DELETER COMIC BOOK PAPER (Type A with scale)(10" x 14")
For Dojinshi, B5 size book, Outline scale A 135kgs (A4 paper B5 print size)
This is very convenient for organizing your frames. Besides the scale, it shows center marks, end marks and so on the paper is smooth for tracing with a pen. The paper size is based on JIS standard. There is 135 kg and 110 kg paper sets and people who contribute or draw many pages of comics can choose. 40 pages Lines are printed in blue color which will not affect printing
-AR-DEL201-1002 $5.95

• DELETER COMIC BOOK PAPER (Type A with scale) (8½" x 11½")
For Dojinshi, B5 size book, Outline scale A 110kgs (A4 paper B5 print size) This is very convenient for organizing your frames. Besides the scale, it shows center marks, end marks and so on the paper is smooth for tracing with a pen The paper size is based on JIS standard. There is 135 kg and 110 kg paper sets and people who contribute or draw many pages of comics can choose, 40 pages. Lines are printed in blue color which will not affect printing
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• DELETER COMIC BOOK PAPER (Type A with scale) (8½" x 11½")
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• DELETER COMIC BOOK PAPER (Plain Type B) (10"x14")
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The I.C. line includes color overlays, screens, screens, gradations, and the highly prized Tachikawa line of inking accessories. Give them a try today!
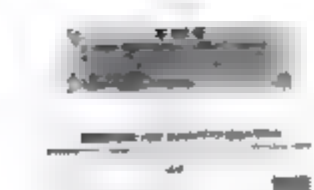
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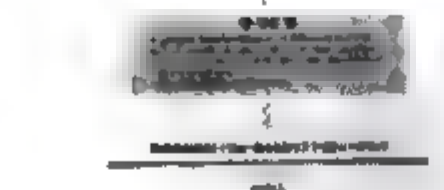-ARIC-160043 $7.95
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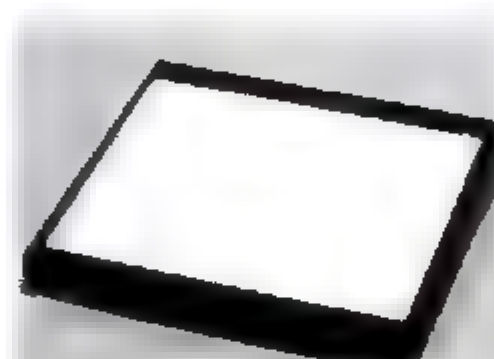30 ml. Smooth black ink.
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Light box is 360 mm x 300 mm x 60 mm (about 14 x 12 x 2.5 inches) Drawing Size is 320 x 230 mm (about 12 6 x 9 inches). Uses 10 Watt bulb (included) and runs 50/60 Hz Weighs 1.4 kg (about 3 1 lbs) and PORTABLE! The light box has a metal strip running at the top. You no longer have to tape your art on! You can just use magnets.
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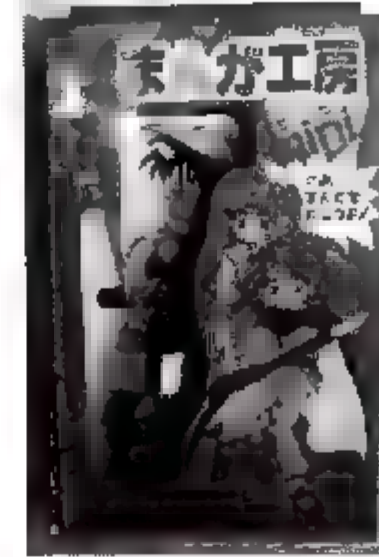-ARIC-160685 $120.00
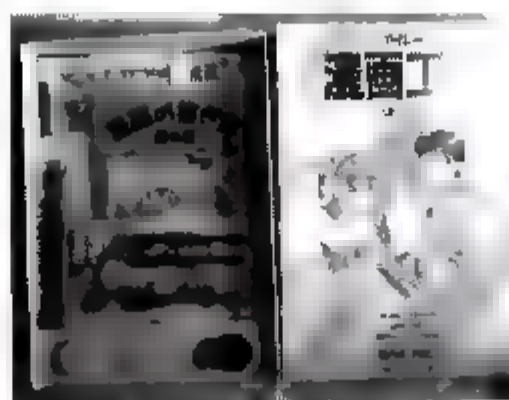
MANGA CLUB KIT
This kit has the tools for all manga artists. It comes with the Basic how to draw manga book. Contains 2

sizes of paper, burnisher. 2 types of tones, stencil for curve lines Includes 2 G-Pen tips, 2 Maru Pen tips, 2 pen holders and black ink and white ink.
-ARIC-160128 $49.95

MANGA CLUB KIT (MINI)
Children's starter kit. Comes with postcard sized paper that demonstrate how to use tone and ink. Includes 2 G-Pen tips, 2 Maru Pen tips, 2 pen holders. Mini demo tone, black ink and white ink. Perfect gift for artistic children and those who just want to try manga art techniques out
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This wooden pen-holder holds a variety of nibs.
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NIKKO MARU PEN
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-ARIC-302094 $4.30
NIKKO NIHON-MOJI PEN
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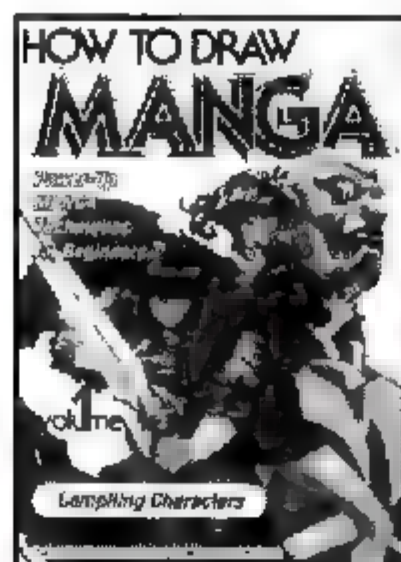**TACHIKAWA SCHOOL PEN**
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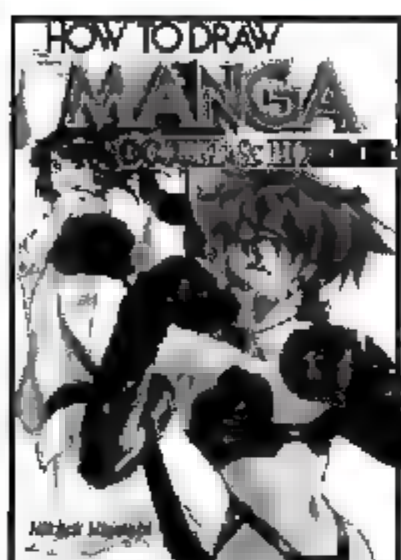HOW TO DRAW MANGA V. 2
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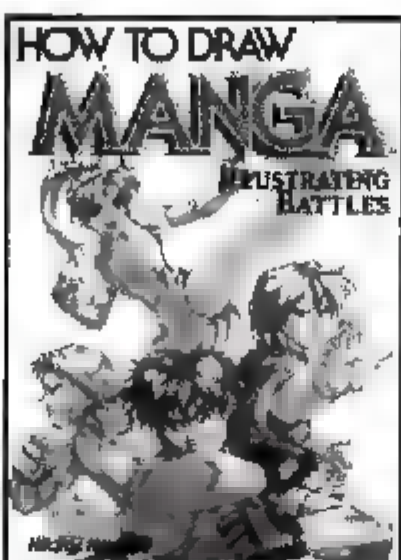HOW TO DRAW MANGA V. 4
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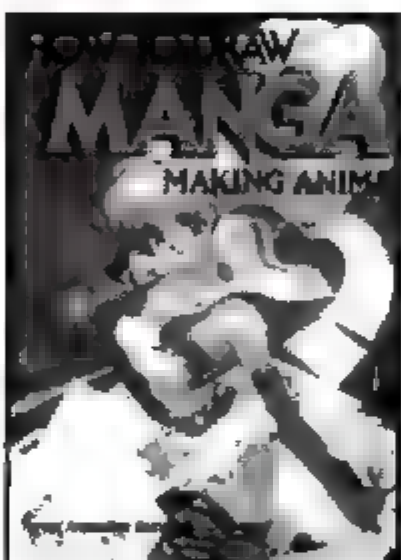
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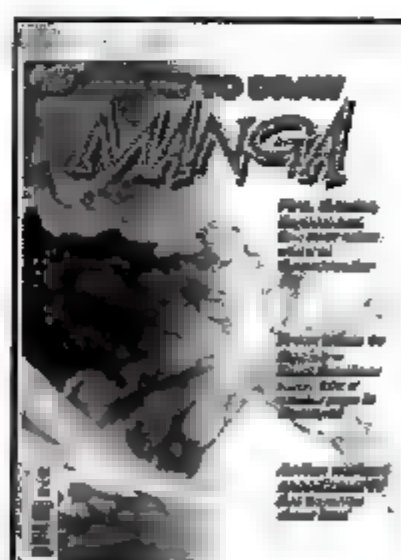Digital Comic Guide vol. 1
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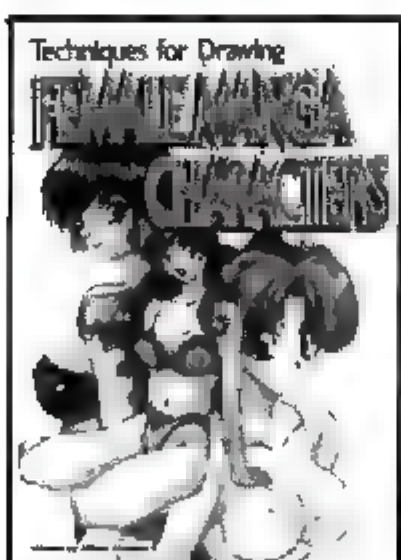
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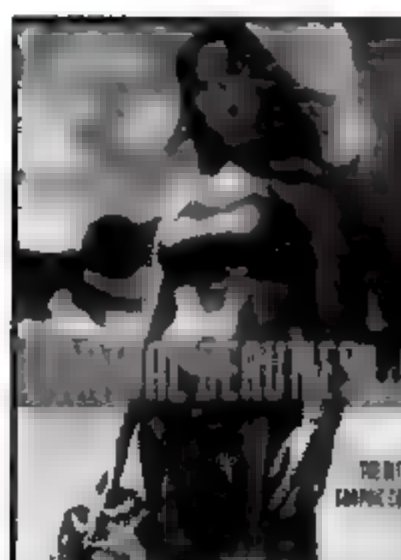GAME CHARACTERS
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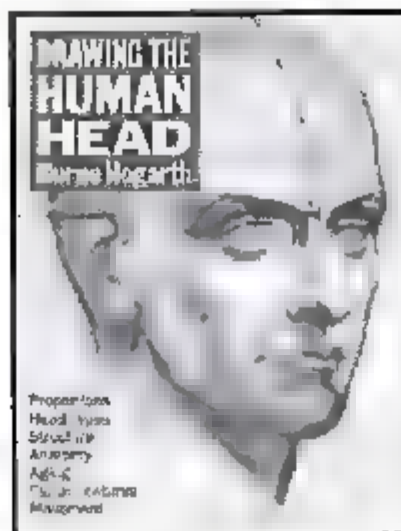GAME CHARACTERS
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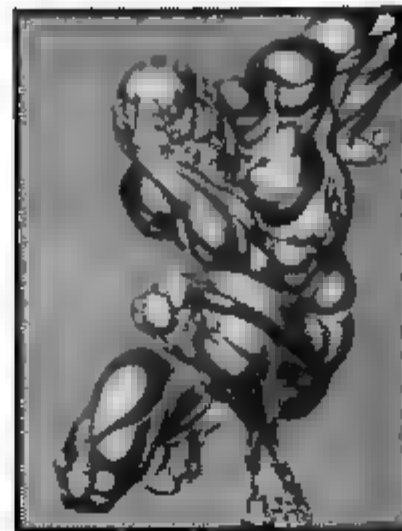
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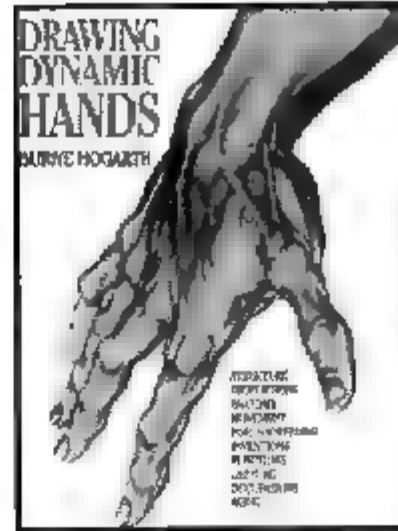**DYNAMIC FIGURE DRAWING**
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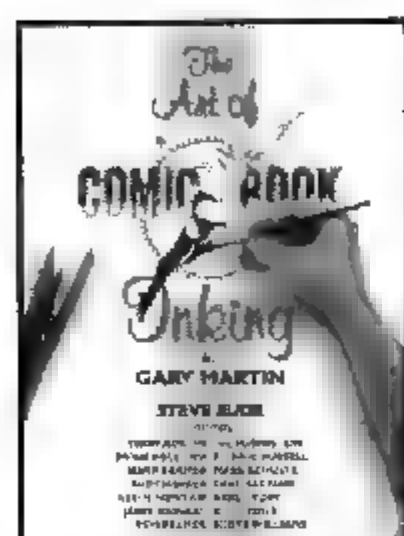ITEM# AB1003 $22.75

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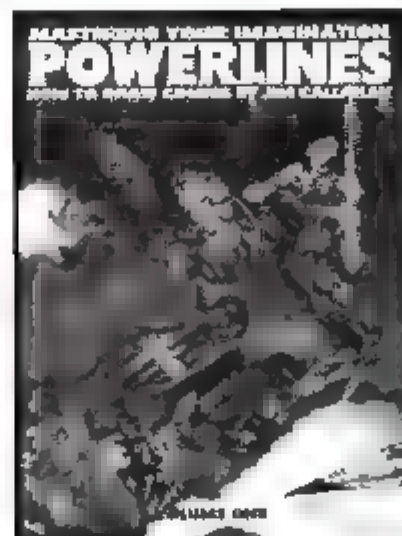**DYNAMIC LIGHT AND SHADE**
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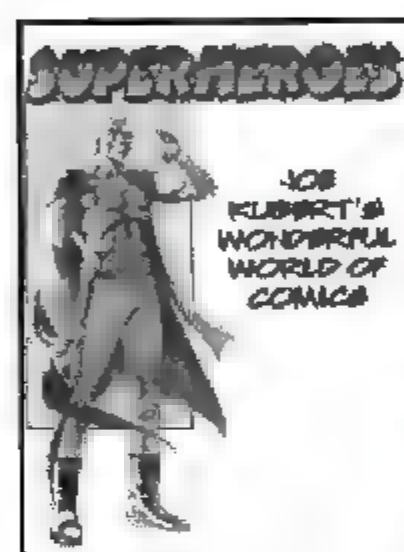
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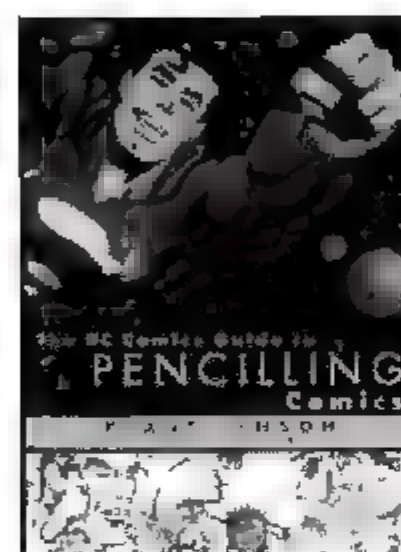
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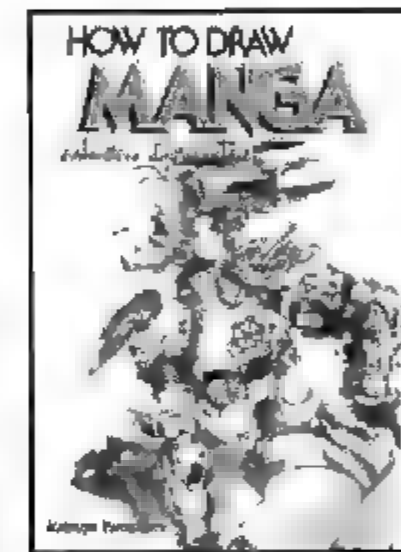ITEM# AB1025 $21.95

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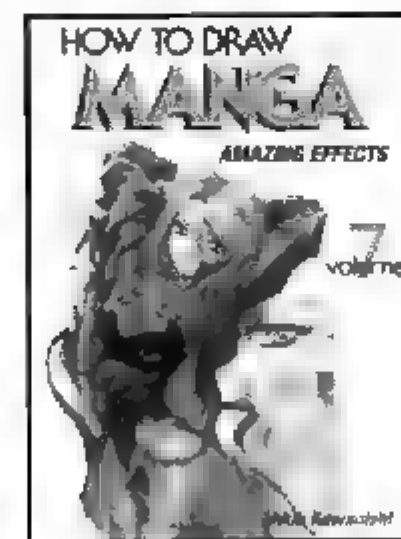ITEM# AB1024-2 $10.95

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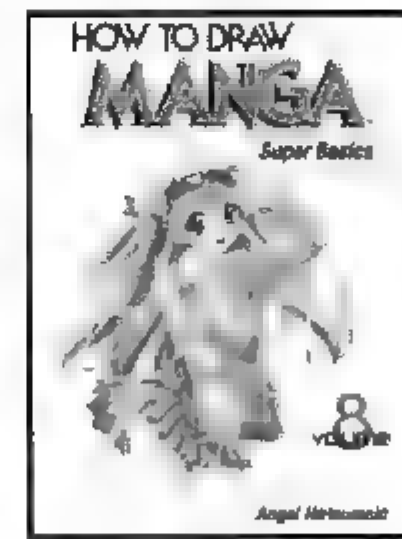ITEM# AB1017   SRP $21.95

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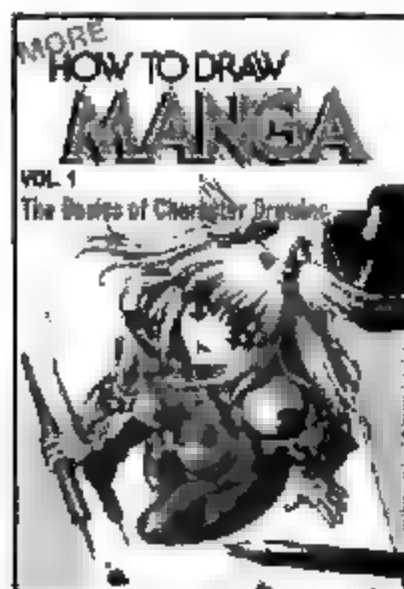ITEM# AB1015m26 $21.95

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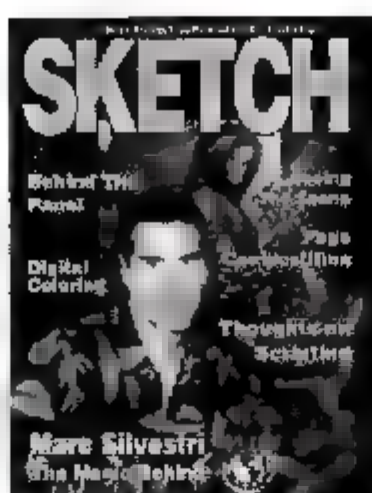
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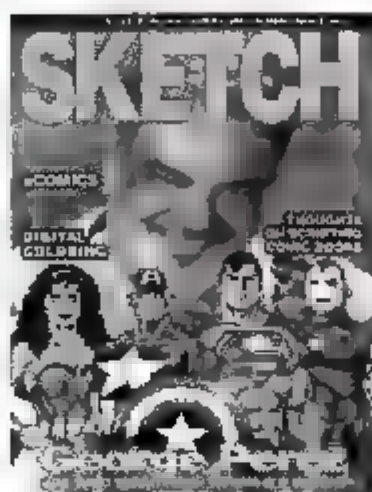
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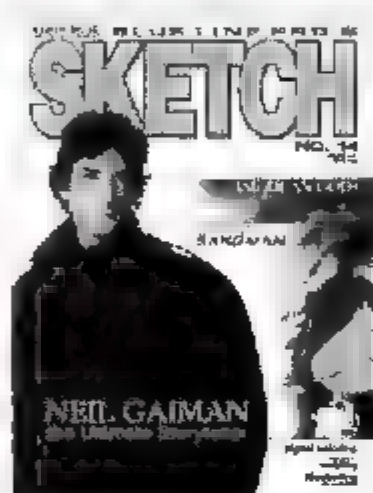
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MITCH BYRD'S
How to Draw

Light Up Your Pencils

A little light, please

#1. As a comic-book artist - as any good artist - you should always be studying and learning through your own experience in looking at the world around you. Even though we often think of our comic pencil work in terms of rendering and line weight, never overlook the great importance of the effect and affect of light on people, places, and things. Spend time looking at how light changes through atmospheric haze, when light brings out the volume of things by illuminating one side of something and casting shadows from the other, how it brings out the textures on various surfaces, and anything else you notice when you glance around. No, that's look around.

Remember, except around black holes, light travels in straight lines until it hits something and bounces off of it. And when that light bounces off of a surface it moves on to the next, at least that measure of the light that was not absorbed by the surface it just hit.

Light surfaces are more reflective than dark ones. Ever notice how dark cars are hotter than a pink Cadillac?
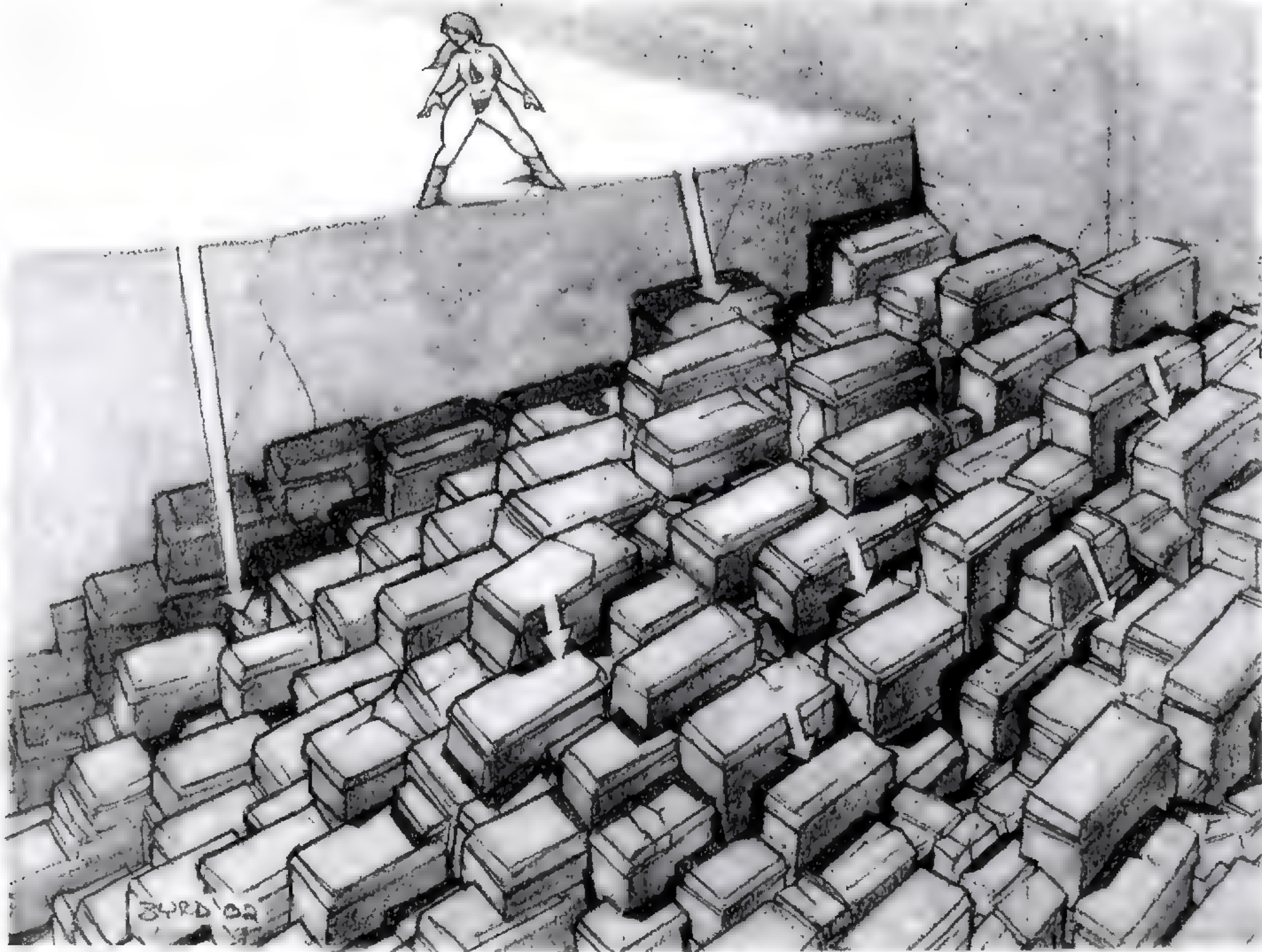
#2. The amount of light reflected can illuminate the sides of objects that are not in the direct line of light. In Figure #2 the sunlight casts strong shadows, but not complete shadows, as the backside of the objects are slightly illuminated from the reflected light. The reflected light is just weaker than the direct sunlight.
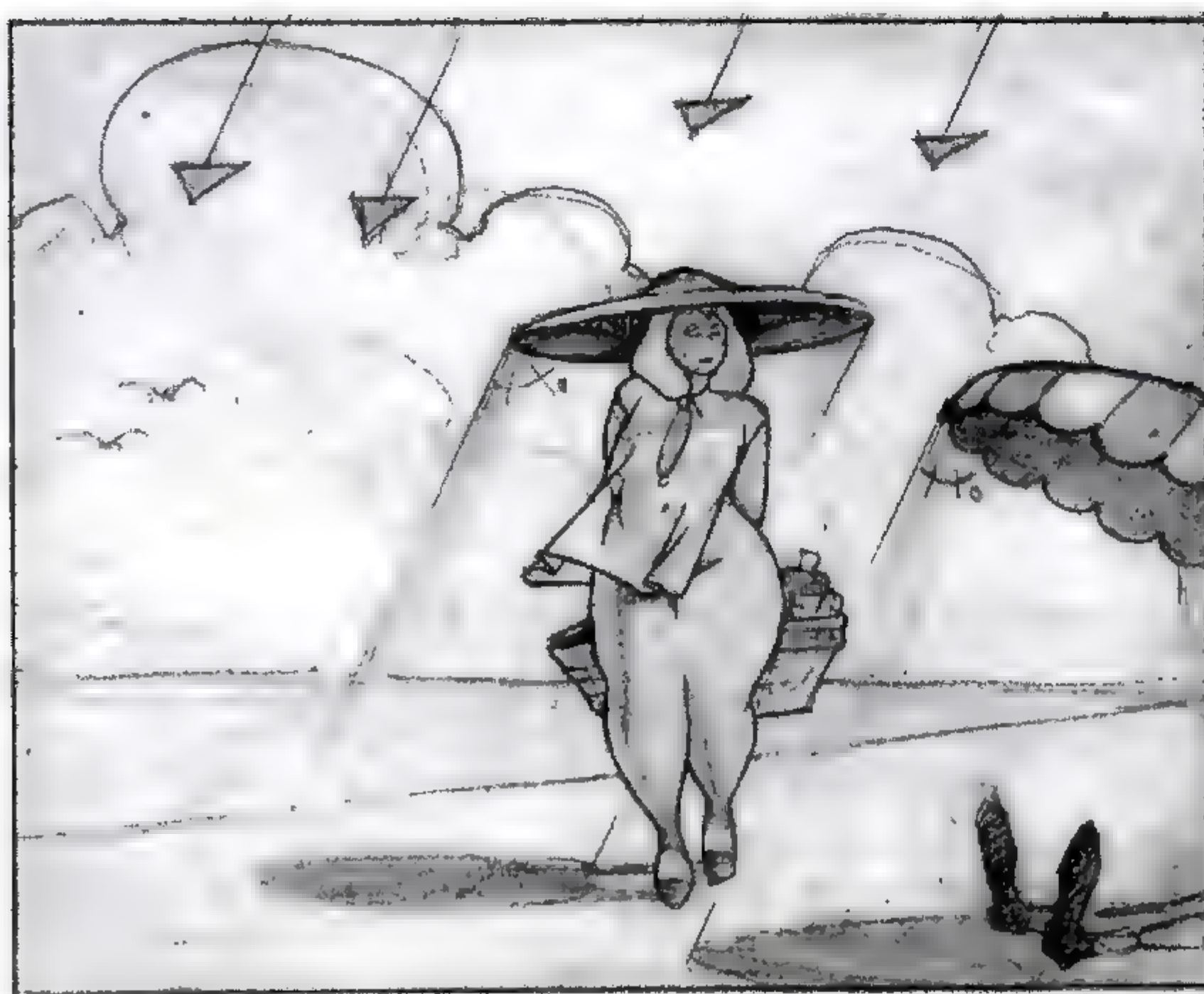
#3. The distance of the light source from the objects being illuminated is an important thing to consider. The sun is about eight light minutes from the Earth, meaning it takes that light eight minutes to reach us. And that's a long way off, considering the speed of light travels at.

This also means that the angles of our shadows from the sun, when cast against the ground, will be the same. When the sun is over head we have small shadows, unless we lay flat and are levitated, then we would cast a shadow on the ground that is equal to our size no matter how high we levitate. Because the sun is so far away, long shadows occur because we live on a round surface that spins during the day. But no matter how long the shadows are they will be cast at the same angle, because the sun hits the objects at the same angle.

If the light source is close to a person or object, the shadow cast behind that object will tend to be larger than that object.

#4. If the l ght source is much closer to the object, then the shadows cast will be larger than the object illuminated. Plus the angles of the shadows cast will vary. In Figure #4 the flashlight s very close to the girl, so her shadow is large. Just because we can't see the invisible man doesn't mean the invisible man can see without a flashlight…well - a flashlight in America, a torch in England.
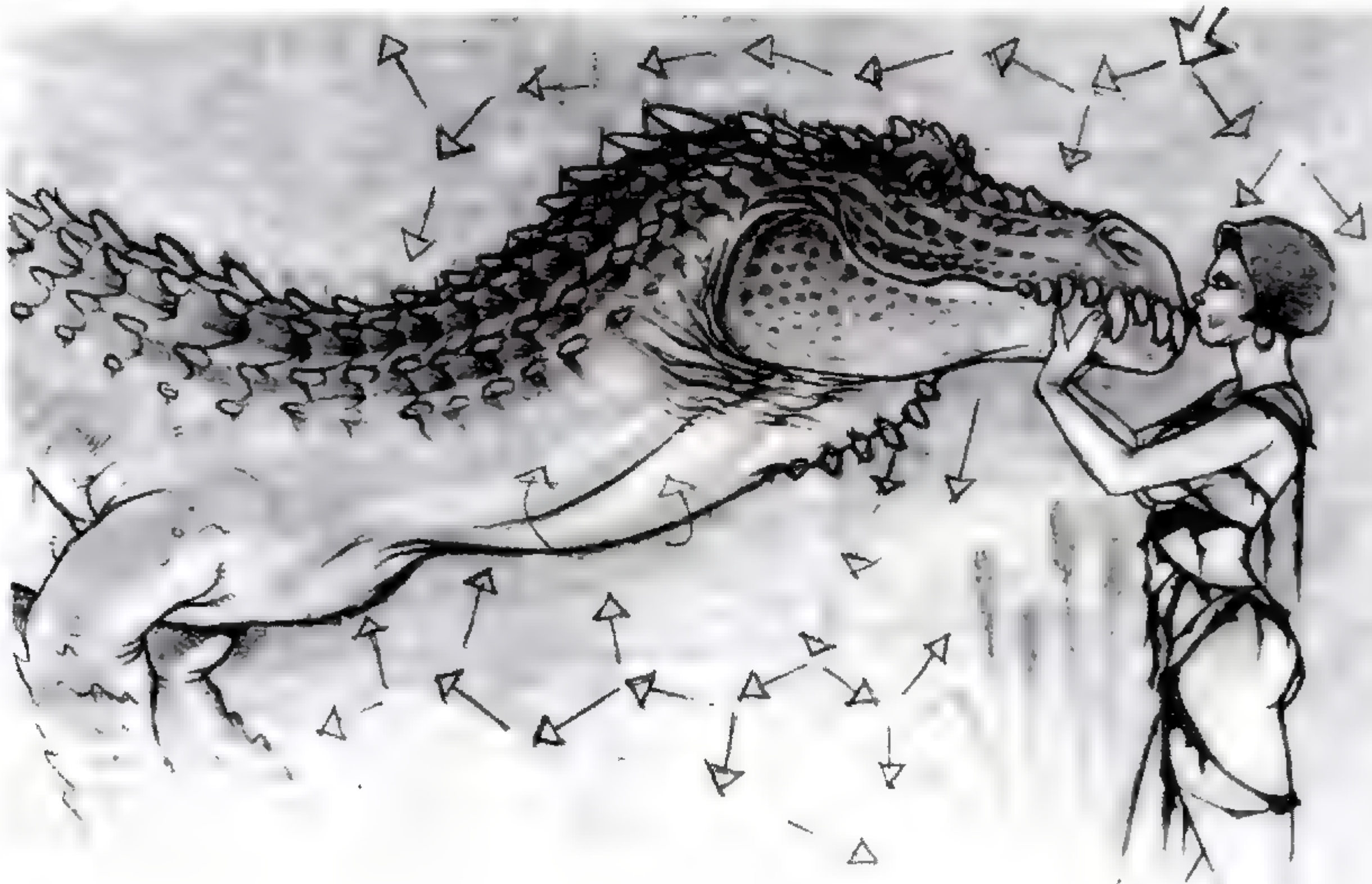
Hey¹ If she kisses the dragon, maybe he'll turn into a fashion designer.

#5. When light hits fog the particles reflect off each bit of fog in different directions, bouncing sideways and upward. That way there appears to be an under lighting on objects in a fog. No strong shadows here, as the light passes through this particular filter.

#6. In illustration, we often use light as is done in the theater or film; using a spotlight or highlight to distinguish the main character from his, her, or its surroundings. In Figure # 6 the black smoke behind the zombie machine gunner provides an opportunity to make the old dog stand out on stage. His gun spit fire and glints in the dun against the black smoke, and the face can be dark and determined against the space where the sun is getting through. I'm sure some head noodle washer with a PHD would read all sorts of meaning into these simple light contrasts, but I just thought it would help make a gritty picture.

What's important is that you don't fail to study the light all around you, and apply what you've learned to your penciling – it will help add authenticity and confidence to your work in any genre from tough, noir crime to slick super-doings.

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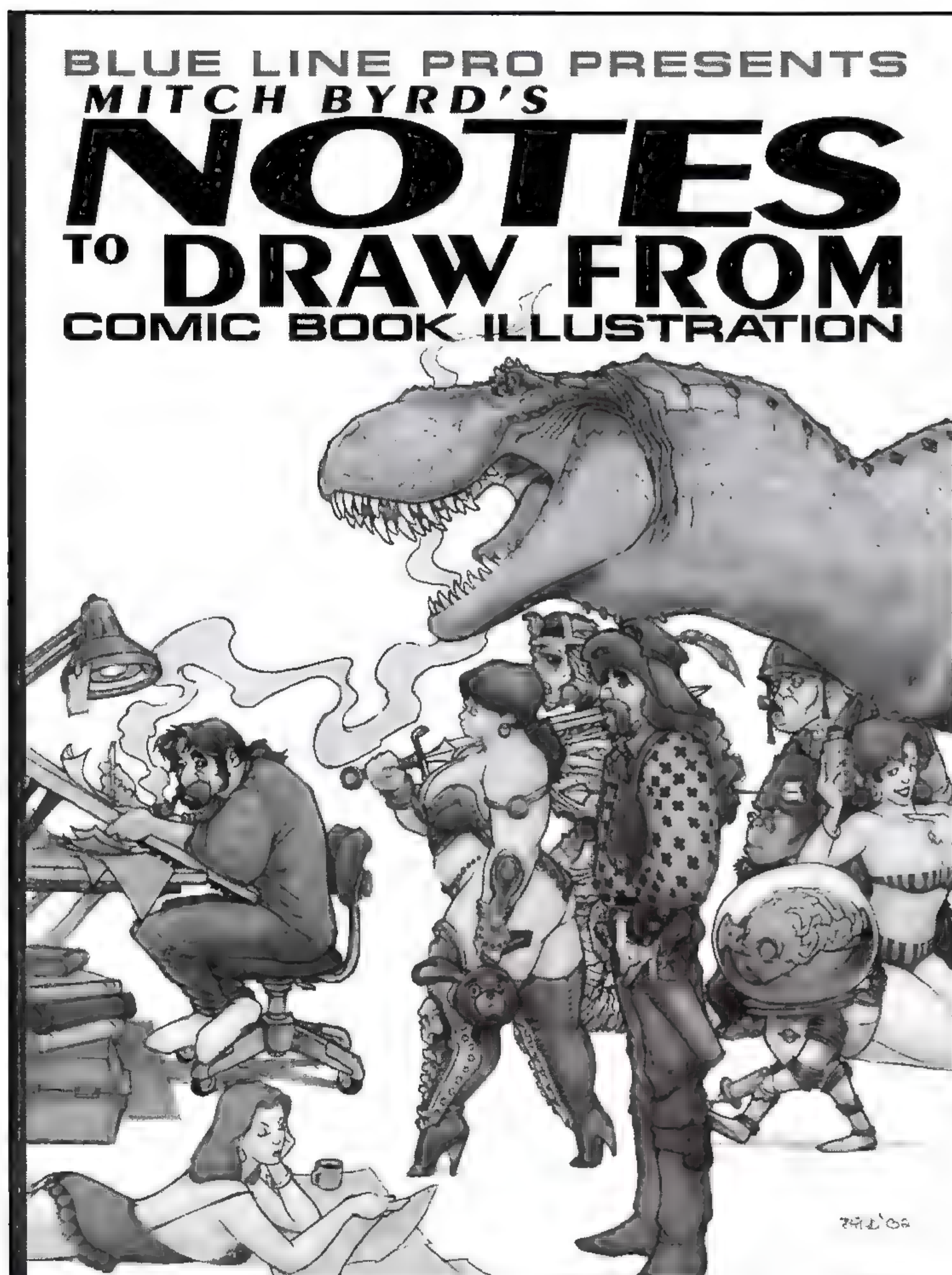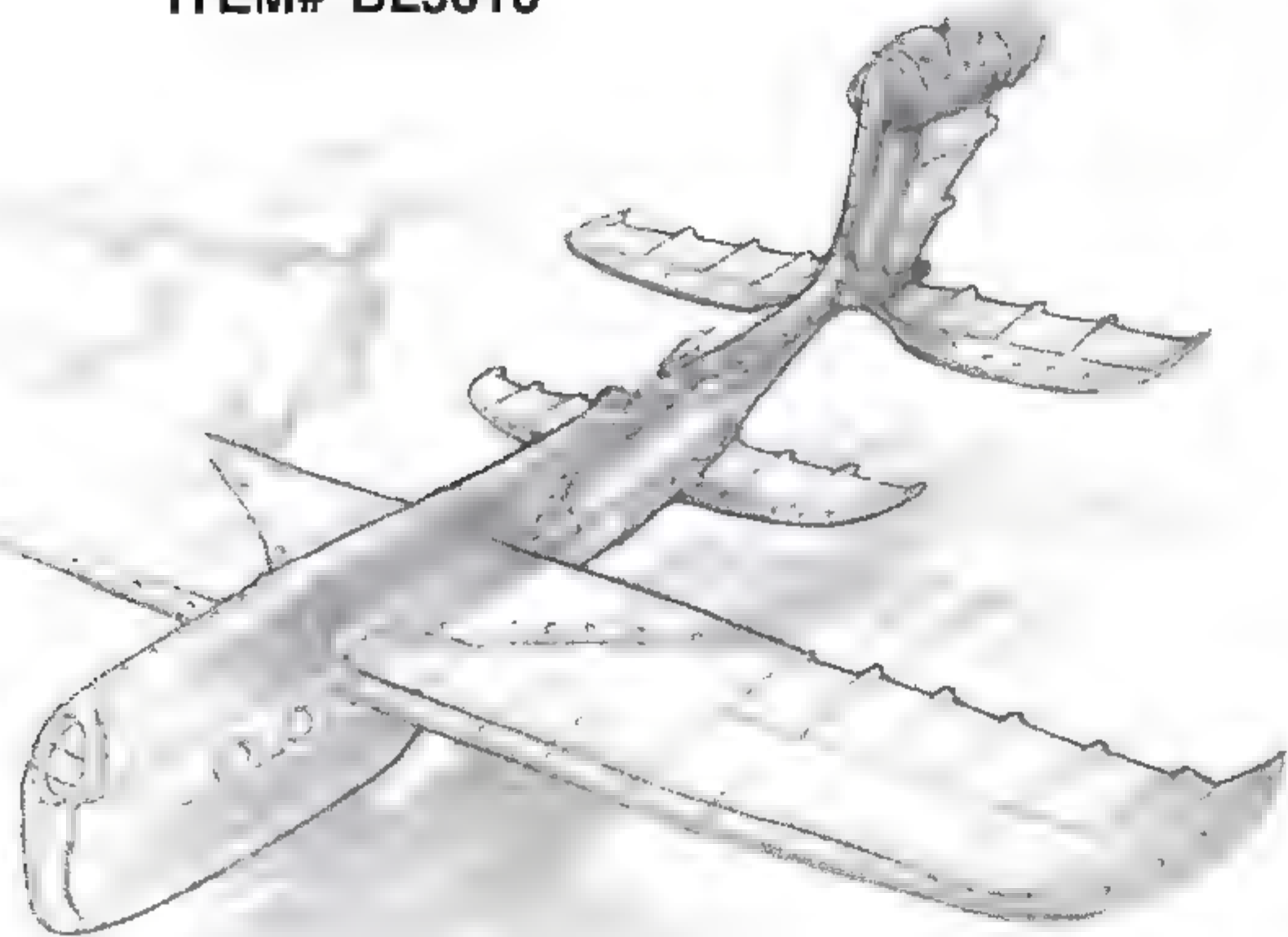
TOM BIERBAUM'S
The Universe at Your Finger Tips
Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books

How To Be Funny

This issue, I thought I'd tackle humor in comics. Of course, nobody can actually teach you "how to be funny," and there's nothing *less* funny than a technical discussion about being funny. But then I'm not here to get laughs, just communicate a few tips on how you might sharpen your comic-writing skills. And in the area of humor, here are a few things to keep in mind...

1. To An Extent You Either Have It Or You Don't, So Be One of the People That "Has It."

Being funny is largely instinctive, so it often comes very naturally to some and seems to be almost impossible for others.

But I think almost everyone can be funny in his or her own way and in the right circumstance. Don't convince yourself you're one of those people who "just aren't funny." Observe yourself, and notice those times when you *are* funny. Figure out what works for you and what doesn't, and get the most out of the sense of humor you've got.

The people who "just don't have it" are really people who don't notice when and where they're funny, and have erroneously convinced themselves they can't be funny.

2. As In All Creative Endeavors, "Sketch" Until You Find the Good Stuff.

No good artist settles for the first line he puts down on the page. He *sketches* many lines until he has the one that's just right.

Likewise, serious writers don't sit down and write perfect novels from start to finish. They "sketch" many ideas, many themes, many outlines and many sentences, and are always discarding the material that doesn't work. And that's how humor works. The funniest writers in the world have to *work* at it. Nine out of ten of their ideas might not work, but it's their willingness to keep trying until they get to the one that *does* work that separates them from the writers who don't seem as funny.

So when you're looking for a humorous line or want a funny situation in your story, don't be afraid to kick around ten or twenty possibilities as you look for just the right one. This doesn't have to be time consuming or unpleasant, especially as you train yourself to enjoy the process of unleashing your mind and letting the ideas just pop out

rapid-fire. The ideas don't all have to be good ones, just *creative* ones. Sometimes the funniest gag can be an absolute nonsequitur (as anyone who's seen the Monty Python "Spam" skit can attest), so just let the ideas flow, and then pick out the one that really is funny.

A lot of times *none* of your ideas will be working, but that's when you just forget about this particular problem for an hour or a day. Often, the best jokes will come flowing to you the minute you get back to it. And a lot of times those great jokes won't even wait till then; they'll hit you in the middle of the night, or while you're standing in line at the super market, or wherever.

3. As In All Creative Endeavors, Build Up Your Creative Muscles.

Again, being funny is a lot like all forms of creative expression. Most people who're good at it have spent years building up the creative mental muscles needed to do it well So don't think people who are funny for a living didn't spend years being mostly unfunny before their determination got them through the developmental years. Sure the great ones seem like they do it without effort, just like great athletes look like they can excel at will. But in both cases, what you're seeing is the product of years of practice, training, and the building up of strengths the layman just doesn't have.

The point isn't that you'll need to work at it for years before you'll be funny. It's that when you find yourself unable to be funny at will, understand that almost nobody is funny at will. It takes a little effort

4. Collect Ideas Constantly.

Probably more than any other kind of idea, humorous ones will hit you at the oddest times, and completely out of the blue In this area probably more than others you've got to collect and jot down any and

all ideas that hit you, wherever and whenever that might be

For example, a former colleague and I used to keep a list of particularly funny-sounding names that we'd run across in the media. I didn't realize at the time that I was doing research for a future comic project, but when we started writing *Dead Kid* I began to pop many of those silly names into the series. The editor of the Flipper High newspaper could have been Ashley Jones or Ashley Williams, but it added to the insanity of our universe to name her Ashley Wenzel-Spoo. And if we'd tried to make up a silly name on our own I doubt we could have struck quite the chord we got with an actual name like Wenzel-Spoo (which I believe came from a prominent European conductor).

5. Scavenge, Yes. Swipe, No.

The temptation will be to just lift routines you see in popular movies, TV shows, and comic strips. And by all means, go to these sources to study their humor and maybe learn something about how it works. But don't swipe the actual jokes. Ethical questions aside, you're not going to impress your audience if they end up saying, "Oh, I know where he got that."

This is a tough one. I'm always amazed to see my humorous efforts five or ten years after I've written them, and realize how utterly derivative they are of what was hot comedy at the time. For a skit in college I played a guy giving a TV editorial who got progressively more agitated and, at the height of his anger, used the line, "But nnnnnnno!" At the time it felt like I was doing "something a little like" the John Belushi routine then currently popular on *Saturday Night Live*. A few years later, I realized I was doing something *exactly* like Belushi's routine. It's easy to blindly imitate without even realizing it, so take extra care when it feels like you're doing something

Sometimes less is more. Dead Kid's dad pats Morty on the shoulder, causing his arm to fall off. The gag probably wouldn't have worked as well if we had dad's jaw plunge and his eyes bug out. With his subtle reaction, his discomfort and awkwardness is more believable and the gag works better.

"a little like" the latest hot comedy routine.

The essence of comedy (and most good creative work) is to make people see something interesting and true about the world around them that they hadn't noticed before, and you can't do that by repeating something everyone has already seen. Do jokes that no one else can do because they don't have your exact insights into the human condition, and you'll be generating a kind of humor nobody else can do.

6. Avoid Humorous Catch Phrases.

If you want to be genuinely funny, don't repeat the jokes everyone is using right now. Anything that's really funny and new will quickly catch on, but at some point it passes into the general culture and becomes a tired catch phrase being used in places where there really isn't even a joke any more. That's the point at which you start sounding pretty hackneyed when you go along with the crowd. If you wade through the last few decades of humorous material and find phrases like "Where's the beef," "Sock it to me," "Show me the money," "Don't have a cow," "Get a life," "Sit on it," "Thanks, I needed that," "Well, excuuuuuuse me," etc ; generally they're not going to seem very funny today because they weren't really funny back then. They were just uninspired references to a contemporary bit of humor that *was* funny when it first came out.

We'll sum it up with one last line that stopped being funny a couple administrations ago: using these kinds of catch phrases will keep your humor fresh and entertaining   *not!*

7. Instead, Find More Obscure Sources of Humor That Can Be Adapted in Fresh Ways.

What you *don't* want to do is lift humor from some source your audience is well aware of. What you *do* want to do is find inspiration and ideas in sources not familiar to your audience. Or to take something familiar and put it into a new context, so it becomes a fresh and inspired piece of humor.

In the late 1960s when half the kids in America were reading *Peanuts* religiously, my own thinly disguised rip-off strips didn't have a lot to offer. But now, anyone who goes to the effort of tracking down those thirty-five-year-old strips will find tons of inspiration and lots of great humorous technique that's no longer top-of-mind for most of the population.

Another example from the mid 1960s: The "Cone of Silence" routine on *Get Smart*. Bumbling secret agent Maxwell Smart would insist on holding classified discussions inside the Cone of Silence, which had the world's worst acoustics. So the only people that could hear the classified conversations inside the Cone were the people outside of it. Well, if we'd tried to copy that gag in 1967 when *Get Smart* was one of the hottest comedies around, we'd have looked pretty lame Instead we waited until the early 1990s and came up with a would-be super-hero named Echo-Chamber Chet, whose power created that same effect for a band of aspiring heroes in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #49. For some of our audience it was a completely original gag because they'd never seen those *Get Smart* episodes, and for others it was a new twist on something they probably hadn't seen in years.

8. For God's Sake, Avoid In-Jokes.

I think the downfall of much of the humor in contemporary comics is that it's inside humor. There's some joke you have going among your buds, and to you it's a scream to put that joke into a comic book. But if a total of maybe a dozen people get the joke you've left the vast majority of your readership feeling like an outsider, wondering what the heck is going on in your comic.

We've certainly been guilty of that from time to time, but by-and-large we've attempted to make any inside references in our comics the kind of thing that wouldn't even *seem* like a reference to the average reader, and would only have significance to those in the know.

For example, our run on *Legion of Super-Heroes* featured an apparently cloned version of the Legion that we had to call *something*, so we called it "batch SW6." We hoped to most people that would seem like just a few random letters and a number, but it was, in fact, part of the postal code of a friend of ours in England who was a very prominent fan of the kind of younger and idealistic Legion this batch SW6 represented. He got the reference, and most readers had no idea there was any reference to get.

Another example: a friend of ours named Jon Liggett once wrote a series of stories in which he repeatedly and gratuitously killed off the protagonist for humorous effect. So we started killing off a character named Liggett (or something similar) in as many series as we could. I don't think anyone who wasn't aware of the joke ever noticed or cared that the name Liggett kept popping up in many of our comic-book universes, so we got in our little in-joke without hurting our story or making any reader feel like an outsider.

In fact, these in-jokes *helped* us write our stories, because we found it hard to create from scratch code numbers and character names that felt natural and right. But by pulling out examples from our own lives, we filled in those blanks more quickly and easily than if we'd tried to come up with something out of thin air that sounded as natural and real as these in-joke references.

I also urge comic writers to avoid in-jokes that play to the current comic-buying audience. Yes, that *is* your audience and if they all get the joke, what's the harm? Well, for one thing these kind of industry in-jokes are going to increase the insular nature of our business, and make it that much harder to get new people to stumble across our products and feel welcome and part of the festivities.

But even more than that, this kind of industry-inside humor is going to train you to specialize in "you had to be there" jokes. Better to communicate humor that's funny to the widest possible audience than humor that won't be funny outside today's comic-fan audience (and probably won't even be funny to that audience as it will exist in ten years)

And imagine what would happen if a movie studio or animation company looked at your project for possible adaptation, and found they didn't get most of the jokes because they're not active fans. Don't limit your humor by aiming it at such a narrow audience.

9. The Essence of Most Good Comedy, Like Good Drama, Is Surprise.

Avoid the obvious. Don't use the first or most obvious punch line that comes to you. When Lucy inevitably tricks Charlie Brown and pulls away the football to send him flying — even after she's produced a signed document assuring him that she won't — we laugh not because Lucy's trick was predictable, but because she always has some unexpected punchline to explain her actions ("Peculiar thing about that signed document... it was never notarized.").

If someone takes a pie and winds up to throw it, we all know somebody's going to get it in the face. But we're going to laugh a lot harder if the apparent target ducks and an unexpected target gets it.

That's how most humor works. You're almost like a magician, who distracts the audience with one hand while the other hand is performing the actual "magic." A humorist uses his words and pictures to point the audience's expectations one way so he can hit them out of the blue with a punchline they didn't see coming.

10. Character Reactions Can Generate Your Biggest Laughs.

A lot of great comedy works because we like and identify with the central characters, and enjoy watching them react to the outrageous characters and events surrounding them. This kind of humor can work especially well in traditional comics. If the reader is willing to accept a world of heroes dressed like bats, time travel, and giant aliens who eat planets, it isn't hard to get people to laugh by simply showing your character responding the way any of us would if we encountered this stuff in our everyday lives. This is how they got a laugh in the *Ghostbusters* movie during the team's maiden assignment. The guys are getting into an elevator in full battle gear, and they ask a wary citizen who'd also been waiting for the elevator, "Going up?" The response is simply: "I'll take the next one." It gets a laugh, because in real life we know *we* wouldn't want to get onto an elevator with three guys in those getups.

Once you get the reader to accept some sort of insanity, you can play the reactions pretty straight and get lots of laughs. We once had Matter-Eater Lad (by then a Senator on his home planet of Bismoll) convince Polar Boy to dress up in a silly-looking false head that made him look like "Brain-O," a super-intelligent alien. Polar Boy's power then causes the false head to shrink slightly and get stuck on Polar Boy's head. The two of them end up in a men's room, where Matter-Eater Lad is attempting to discreetly eat the false head off of Polar Boy. None of this is very logical or plausible, but as long as we got the readers to accept the early elements of the set-up, the punch lines just flowed with almost no effort. In this case artist Keith Giffen wisely left the action off-panel, and we simply hear this immortal dialogue:

"What's going on in here?!"
"My god, he's eating that man's head!"
"It's okay, I'm a Senator!"

Put the least plausible parts of your set up as early in the process as possible, and get the reader to accept them long before the punch lines arrive. Imagine how we'd have blown the above climax if at that point in the story we were just getting around to explaining how Polar Boy got stuck in the false head. Lay your groundwork early so nothing gets in the way of the punch line

Even the most serious, grim story can benefit from a touch of humor. Here, a StormQuest story filled with suffering and strife from a little levity. Somebody's clothes are missing, and the hunky Kurt gets an admiring once-over from the seemingly dispassionate android Shalimar.

11. Don't Over-Do It.

In humor, less is often more. The tendency can be to do really over-the-top humor, but you'll usually get bigger laughs if you play it pretty straight. Think of the difference between a comedian in an every day business suit making wry observations and a clown in floppy shoes, a fright wig, and a bright red nose dropping his pants to get a laugh.

In humor, we want the joke to exist in a mostly believable universe. Look at classic comic strips like *Peanuts* and *Calvin & Hobbes*. The backgrounds are very well drawn and realistic, and only the characters themselves are fanciful. The more we believe these worlds, the funnier the actions of the characters within them seem.

So if one of your comic-book characters is being humorous, get the artist to resist giving him a broad grin and goofy body language. If the art screams, "Here comes a joke!" you're going to lose half the surprise value of your punch line, and it just isn't going to be as funny.

12. Know the Place of Humor.

Now that we've spent a lot of time and space talking about humor, I should probably mention that you may find it pretty hard to find any place at all for humor in today's comic-book market.

Some of today's readership wants comics to be taken very seriously and sees most humor as undermining that mission, especially humor that reminds the readers how implausible a lot of super-hero traditions are. But resist those tendencies. You don't have to be making fun of your universe to be having fun with it. And most stories, no matter how dark, can benefit from at least an occasional touch of humor. Even at its most bleak life has its humorous aspects — any fictitious universe that's devoid of humor is a little less real and alive as a result.

Beyond that, if you want to find ways to bring kids back to comics, remember that a lot of us older readers started on comics like *Richie Rich*, *Sugar and Spike* and *Archie* — all humor titles — before we

moved on to super-heroes. Kids love to laugh, and generally are bored by worlds where laughter isn't allowed.

13. Humor Isn't a Short Cut.

It's different for every writer, but I find humor harder to write than a straight action-adventure story. It isn't necessarily that hard to put your characters in danger or in conflict, but making them funny is something you just can't fake.

I think some people regard serious stories as "real" writing and humorous stories as silly and easy writing, but I don't think most readers share that point of view. If they aren't laughing, it's just as obvious as when they're left bored by a dramatic story.

Writing genuinely funny humor can be pretty darn difficult. And if you don't find it so that's not because it's "easy" writing, it's because you're good at something that isn't easy for most people. If you're truly able to write good humor without much effort you have a rare gift, and one you should put to good use.

14. You Be the Judge.

Be a pretty stern judge of your humor. It's *fun* to come up with silly or rude or inside gags, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's *funny*. Recognize when you're laughing just because it's *your* joke, or just because you've come up with something silly or shocking. Develop the ability to distinguish between what's funny to you in a particular moment and what's truly funny to someone who isn't inside your head at that moment. Get away from inside humor enough that you can be the best judge of your humor. Get to the point where if you think it's funny, your audience will think it's funny.

That's when humor writing is the most fun — when all you have to do is make yourself laugh to know you're doing the job right. So good luck at adding real humor to your projects. Now more than ever, a good story can always use a good laugh.

Building Character
The *Violent Messiahs* on the Honing of Scalpel

by Bill Baker, with Jan Utsteln-O'Neill
and the *Violent Messiahs* crew

Scalpel is one sharp character, sure to slice her way directly to your center of interest upon meeting her in the latest *Violent Messiahs* series…but it took plenty of hard work by her creators to give her the perfect edge.

Originally conceived and launched in the early 90s, the first rendition of *Violent Messiahs* was one of the many victims of that decade's four-color implosion. But when co-creators Bill O'Neill and Joshua Dysart relaunched the title just before the turn of the millennium it was reintroduced into a whole new comics arena, and with a completely different look courtesy of penciler Tone Rodriguez. The new version of the series, a heady mixture of poetry, violence and suspense, quickly became a favorite of fans and critics alike. When the book's first arc ended, people immediately wanted to know what was next.

Two collections of *VM* are now available: *Violent Messiahs: Genesis*, and *Violent Messiahs Vol. 1: The Book of Job*, but it turns out that these creators had already begun working on the sequel, even before the first miniseries was in the can. As the wellspring of the *VM* universe, it fell upon Bill O'Neill to start the process of creating the next chapter in the saga of Rankor Island's cops, criminals and vigilantes; *Violent Messiahs: Lamenting Pain*. And to do that, he looked to the original version of the series.

"The initial premise was that there were going to be different vigilante-type characters introduced throughout the series," O'Neill explained. "I was mainly focusing on the first one, which was Citizen Pain, but I was also sort of flexing my imagination by trying to come up with a couple of other ideas as well, just for the future stories. And I came up with the name Scalpel, and I just thought, 'That would make a cool name for a character, I'll have to remember that one.'"

The character has changed radically in the intervening years. "Initially, way back in '92, this character was *very* different. It was a male character, and he was more of a soldier of fortune," noted O'Neill. "Again, these were just some of the vague ideas that were first there. They weren't written in stone or anything like that. But I always thought the name was pretty decent, and so I really just sort of kept that and put everything else aside."

As Dysart describes it, his "involvement begins with me writing the script, and producing the *idea* of the character, and the personality of the character."
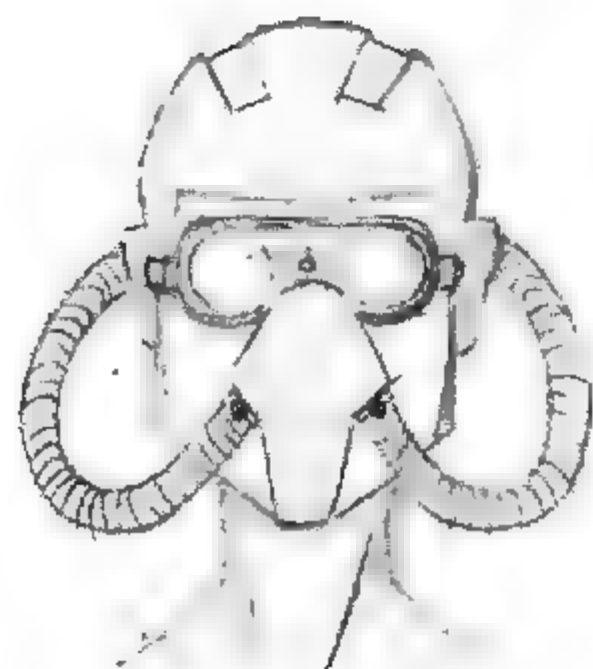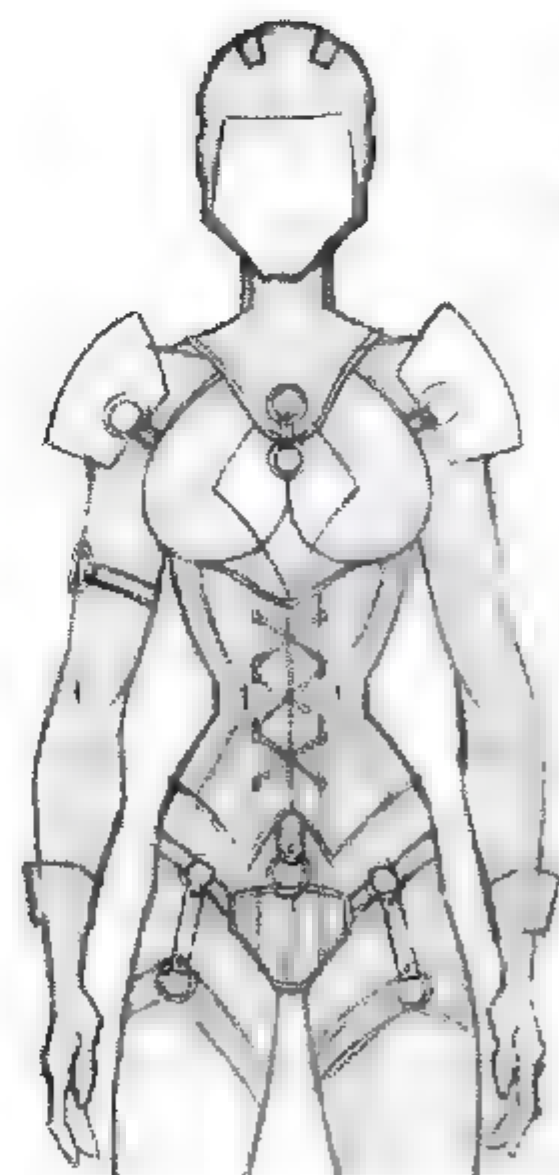
However, the problem was, "her purpose changed a lot as we got into the series. Now she's a fetishist, and that was a very important part of her costuming, obviously, because the theme of the next series is dealing with fetish issues in comics, really, in way."

However, just stating that theme wasn't enough to drive it home to the artists.

With co-creator and artist credits on another - and quite different book; *Chassis* - Bill O'Neill began to work visualizing the character. "Bill began to do some sketches," Dysart says, "and he was going for something that was very *light*. Like, very frilly, and very fluffy. And I really feel that we had humanized Citizen Pain, and so now I wanted our next character, our next vigilante, our next antagonist to be completely dehumanized. It was *really* important to me."

That "frilliness" stemmed from an impulse "to go very sexy with her," says O'Neill. This stemmed from the creator's wish to "add a sort of a hyper-sexy character into the mix, add a little visual uniqueness to her to separate her from Cheri, who was a very realistic-looking person. And one of the visual ideas I had was that she was going to be completely clad in latex, with all the belts and stuff like that, but around the chest area would be a triangle shaped opening that would reveal some cleavage, and it would be very pale, white skin next to the solid black that is the rest of her outfit, which I thought would be very sexy."

Unfortunately although, "the guys liked it, but it wasn't the direction that Josh wanted to go. He was thinking much more along the lines of a *bug* motif with her. It was very interesting, and I didn't have a problem with that." And that's where Tone Rodriguez came in.

Ready to do the design work with non-repro blue and 2H mechanical pencils, the new direction of the character surprised the penciler a little at his first pass on vellum. "My original thought was it was going to be another big, brooding, monster of a guy, and to my surprise, Josh had already started working on his overall idea of what he wanted the character to be like, and it turned out, instead that it was going to be a girl. [Laughter] So that was *my* first introduction to our wonderful little Scalpel."
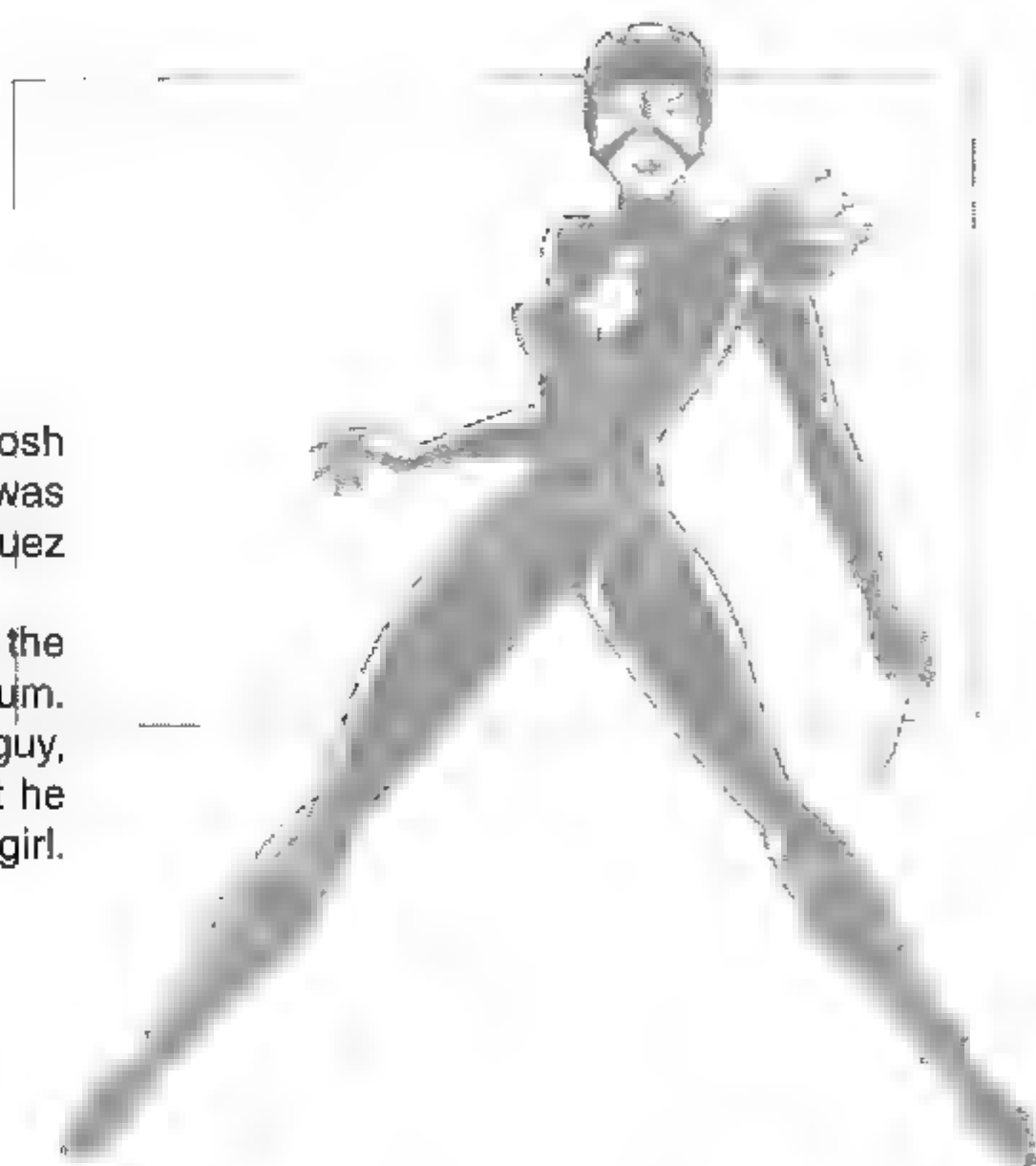
But the artist soon found himself falling into the trap of being too literal with the design of the character, which resulted in a cumbersome costume design. This arose from a combination of Dysart's wish to have Scalpel's face encased in a gas mask and Tone's consequent reliance on photo reference, which resulted in a mask which was realistic, but less than ideal.

Tone laughs, "It was going to be a big breathing apparatus. Everything was getting to the point where it was so real it was unworkable, artistically." So he did what he had to, and tossed that version aside. "I just turned to Josh and said, 'This is a comic book. Let's just suspend disbelief and let's scale it down ... Let's do something that's a little cooler."

Still, the essence of the character proved to be elusive. This lead to a number of visualizations that left the penciler a little embarrassed. As Tone puts it, these sketches featured Scalpel wearing "garters, thigh high boots, braziers and busters, and it was just some gaudy, lame stuff!"

If Tone was embarrassed, his writing partner was getting very, very frustrated. Dysart says of this stage that, while "Tone got closer, but they were both *so* obsessed with humanizing her that they gave her a mask with feathers! It was like they were just so locked in the mammalian idea of the human form." Asked about this, the artist admits that, "There are several designs that will not be seen *anywhere*, because they are so stupid."

But one of the new features of this stage *did* make it to the finalized version, albeit in an altered form: specifically, the razor-tipped whips attached to her head. Taking his inspiration from some of his favorite kung fu films, wherein combatants have small knives woven into the ends of their long tresses, the penciler added them. "I thought that was such a brilliant idea I said, 'Great! I know what I'm going to do, I'm going to have three or four of these things hanging out of the top of her head, and she'll whip around and cut you!' And everybody here *hated* it."

But this idea lead to the inclusion of similar knife-tipped straps to the arms of the character, which did go over well with the rest of the team. "For some reason when I did them there, they really *liked* them," remembers the jovial artist. Still, Dysart wasn't happy with the character's look, and so he took matters into his own hands. "It really came down to Tone and I sitting down, and Tone sketching while I verbalized to it, becoming his internal monologue while he was sketching. So we just kind of discovered her together. And when she came together, it was a revelation." And the key to that discovery was that troublesome gas mask.

Part of the problem, confesses the artist, was "I was *hating* that mask, the idea of doing it." This arose from the fact that, "This whole fetish thing was just so bizarre and off and away from me, I didn't have an understanding of it. I didn't understand, I didn't appreciate any of it, and it really wasn't until we started working on some of the designs that I started to get some of it inside my head." Still, once he had a grasp on it, Tone excelled. "When she came together, it was a revelation," asserts Dysart.
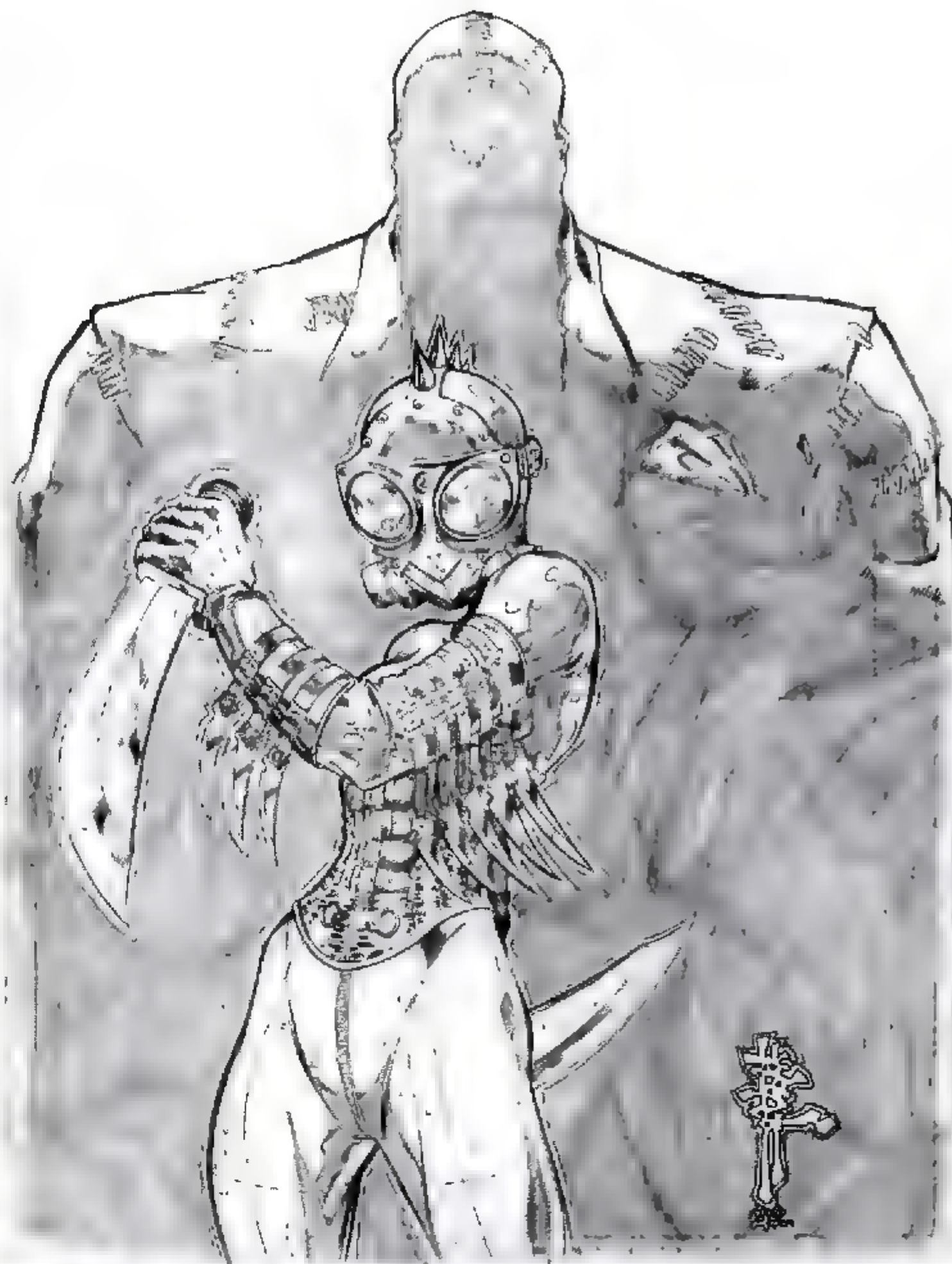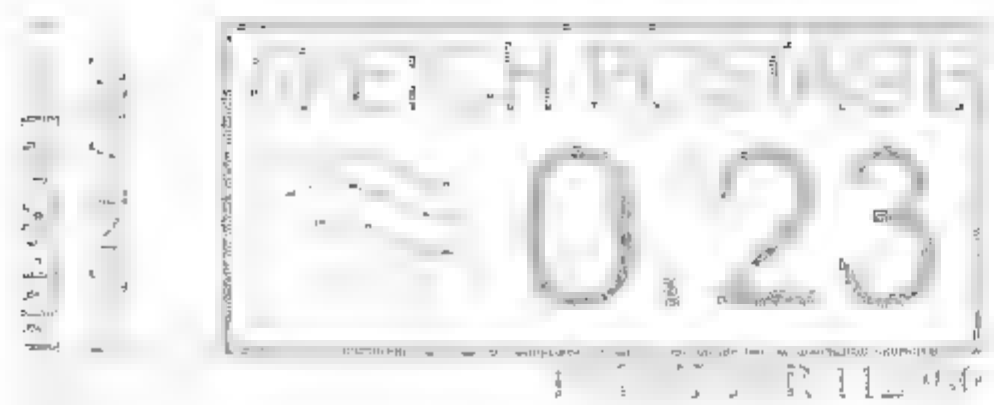
"Once Tone nailed the gas mask, it was amazing. Both him and I just sat back. We had created this thing together — *truly* together." Dysart smiles, then continues, "This was the first time we had really put our heads together and created something 100% together. It was really a fascinating experience. It was really beautiful. I really love the way the character looks now. I couldn't live with another design."

O'Neill concurs. "I'm glad I managed to have a little input on the character. I like sort of providing the initial seed of something and giving it to other people, and they just take off and run with it and do amazing things I would never even have thought of. I'm very, very pleased with the both of them and what they've done."

As far as artist's feelings on the subject, he is his typically perfectionist self. "The only thing that drives me nuts," he says with a straight face, "is that the actual cover to the first issue has her with those blades and straps of leather, but they're really *short.* Currently I'm working on the cover to issue three, and the blades and straps of leather are like two and a half feet long. I really like it, and that's the way it's going to be for most of the book." With that kind of attention to details, combined with their dedication and determination to provide their readers with something original and provocative, it's little wonder that these Violent Messiahs are on the verge of taking the comics world by storm.

Letters Forum

Hey,

I have photoshop LE (it does not have the cmyk channels) and i was told i would have to buy the full photoshop version if i wanted my comic art to print with the correct colors. my question is. can i just use a cmyk color palette that i downloaded (dynotaku's photoshop swatches) off the web ? thanks for your time i really do appreciate it.

Kip

Kip,

I haven't used Photoshop LE, but my guess is that it doesn't support the CMYK settings. If it allows you to use them, great! You may be forced to use RGB as your color mode but be using the CMYK colors to color with.

I would urge you to experiment, but make sure you've worked out the bugs before going full steam ahead with a paying job.

-Aaron

Hey gang,

You answered my first question about writing for comics in Sketch #16 so I figured I'd try my luck a second time. So far, I just haven't been able to get that first break yet so I was considering the following

Some background. I'm thinking about the idea of publishing a super-hero team I created. I have one 22 page issue that I fully pencilled and inked. I also have issue two half pencilled about of those pages two-thirds of them inked. It's taking quite a lot of time to produce pages both pencilled and inked because like most people here I have a full time day job' - well, second shift actually I have some money I could put towards this - about $6000.

What I'd like to have happen. I'd like to produce a four issue limited series of my team. Should it make enough money I'd like to put out a graphic novel of the four issues with maybe a short new story to make it a 96 page trade. Ideally I'd love to have a monthly title of my creation but I'm trying to be realistic here. The book would be a black and white book with a grayscale artist that uses a lot of texturing.

Problems: Doing everything myself is extremely time consuming. Despite trying to put in 10 hours a week at the drawing board progress is slow The bulk of my money would be spent on printing costs. It seems a person can get about 1000 black and white 22 page comics starting around $1200.

Potential solution towards the art: I was thinking about gathering seven artists and have each produce three pages of art. On my non-commercial, personal website I would have reference pictures to hopefully keep costuming and clothing consistent between the artists. The reason I would have so many artists is because I've unfortunately found quite a bit of unreliableness from people when it comes to small press stuff Unfortuantely, I do realize that several different artists could possibly cause the art consistency to be compromised Anyways, since I don't re ally have the money to pay these artists it would be along the lines of work for exposure. They would send me the pages, I ink and scan them and return the pages to the artists. The artist would get some exposure in a printed book. It's not the greatest deal, I realize, I'm just trying to be honest about the whole thing

Finally, I would want the whole four issues produced before soliciting so that none would be late shipping. I also prefer a limited series instead of straight to trade to hopefully prolong the shelf life of the product rather than have it immediately swallowed up by the sea of trades already out there.

Achilles' Heel: Promotion of the book would be limited - maybe a long running ad in the Comics Buyer's Guide and a saturation of internet chat boards.

My expectations. Overall, I would probably lose the majority of the money I invest in this. Since I'm not looking to share ownership of this particular creation the money is going to come all from me. But if I don't try, I'll never really know if I could make it in comics.

Comments?
Jim Roberts
Axel246@aol com

Jim,

I understand the frustrations at getting your project off the ground. I've been working on one myself for three years, and still haven't gotten enough together to produce a comic.

One problem I see with hiring seven artists is that each artist will have a different style; this might interrupt the flow of the story too much for the readers From my time in the alternative line of comics, I feel the readers want the complete package from a single creator. I realize that not everyone can draw but if you can draw and ink then it may be best to do it all yourself. This will help you to build a readership

When it comes to printing, you should get around 2,000 copies for around $1200 - $1400 dollars Always print as many as possible. You can always give any extras away to help attract fans to your book

Be very careful with your advertising money Make sure it is being spent properly to attract your audience. For instance, Comic Buyer's Guide is a great publication but does it attract the audience you feel will find your particular project appealing? If your book is based on a Golden or Silver age look then CBG would be a great place, but depending on the type of book you are putting out, there might be other places and ways that you can promote your project. Again, this is just an example, but think about your audience and then research the outlets you're considering advertising with to see if they appeal to your target group. When you're working on a tight budget, attempt to optimize the results from your advertising dollars

As an independent creator, you'll have plenty of decisions to make - and the decisions are all yours. Always consider your end project, and where it might take you Will you be happy a year later with what you've spent your money creating? Is it something you're proud of enough to take to conventions and promote heavily? And if you're doing all that, what do you hope the end result to be?

I wish you the best of luck.

Bob

Thanks,

I can't tell you how much I have learned from read

ing your magazines I really enjoy them. I also enjoyed meeting all of you in Chicago at Wizard World.

Keep up the good work!

Super Regards,
Jeff Germann
www.SupermanCollectors com

Jeff,

It was nice meeting you in Chicago. I love your website and have forwarded many people your way. Keep up the good work.

Take care,

Bob

Aaron

I have followed your instructions for setting up the picture to be colored as per the artical in Issue 14 of Sketch Magazine Once the pictures in and set up in the Channels part, and you have done the extra line art layer.

Then you say to fill the CMYK channels with white, OK, I've done that and its cool the way you can color and not effect your lines but if you click back to the Layers tab, that one layer is now only white So anyway, you color in your picture and print it off but when you print it off it only prints off the colors, where have the lines gone that you weren't affecting while coloring

Now I presume you do something that brings back the lines so that it prints off properly I have Photoshop 5 5.

Please help
Andrew Dobell

I'm English and spelling Colour without a 'U' is weird.

Andrew,

Here's what you want to do: Go to Image/Apply Image. In this window, select the channel that you have as your line art. Make sure the Blending setting is on Multiply This will put the line back onto the art and print out correctly. You should also get rid of the line art channel after you applied it. I like to save two versions in the end; one with line art channels and one without - just in case you need to go back and make changes

-Aaron

To whom this may concern..

I have just recently purchased your "DIGITAL COLORS FOR COMICS" version 1 0. And it states the compatibility of Adobe Photoshop Curious if this program, the digital.. would be at all compatible with Jasc Paintshop?!?

Thanx.
Nimsha

Hi Nimsha,

*The information provided in the book is *very* specific to Photoshop. There is no information about how to color comics using Paintshop in the book, so I can't suggest using it if is the only program you have Photoshop is the program that the majority of all the computer colorists are using, so I would push anyone interested in coloring to use that program.*

Thanks!

-Aaron

Gentlemen

Just wanted to take a moment to let you all know how much I enjoy your magazine, I've recently begun making the transition from Fine Art toward a more commercial venue and am digging into Role Playing Game company work as well with three companies I hope to improve this number to get some experience under my belt to aid in the transition into comics as well and find your articles entertaining, educational, inspiring and very practical Working a full time job and illustrating almost as many hours on the side keeps me very busy and limits my time - in your magazine the articles are rich and to the point ....aiding me and the countless minions out there in spending less time reading and more time illustrating.

Well done ....

Respectfully
Malcolm Harrison
www.MalcolmTHarrison.com

Malcom,

Your work is impressive. The comic field needs more talent like you, willing to put in the time and effort it takes to achieve a certain quality

Please keep up the good work, and I look forward to see your future endeavors.

Take care
Bob

Help,

What size should the fonts be? Like I was looking at some comics and it looks like in word bubbles and caption boxes the fonts are the same size but what size is it. Just would like to know, I'm about to sum out some lettering samples to Marvel Comics

Thanks
Mike

Mike,

Every font offers a different size First is to decide whether you want to do your lettering at original size, 10" x 15" or at print size, which is 6 ¾" x 10" That will obviously make a huge size difference. I suggest that you look at the comic with your favorite lettering and do some practice runs. Change the line thickness on your word balloons and change the size of your characters until you get your sample to match the comics
Bob

Hi..

I've taken a number of art classes, and read how to books on comics. I'm looking to draw a comic for eventual publishing. My question is, can you recommend some basics for me? For example, ink, brushes, which type of comic art board, etc. I don't even know if I need comic art board, or if regular art board will do, since I plan to draw everything myself. Any help is appreciated

Pete

Hey Pete,

Of course we would like to recommend Blue Line Pro Premier Comic Book Boards for you to work on We supply a number of companies with art board, CrossGen and Image to name a few – and I honestly feel that you'll find our product to be great for your penciling needs, certainly many pros do. As far as good reference for inking I would suggest that you take a look at The Art of Comic Book Inking by Gary Martin, this is a wonderful book. This book gives you many tips on supplies and tools that you should find very useful, especially if you're just starting out. Gary has a follow-up book ready as well, so if you find the first volume as helpful as I think you will, you should look for volume two. And I hope you'll continue to pick up Sketch as we always have something on inking every issue

Hope this has helped a little.
Take care,
Bob

Sketch,

I was passed your last issue by my partner It was great, I couldn't put it down. We are in production of our first Comic book, Thanks for some valuable tips and the reassurance of our steps.

Jav

Jay,

Thanks, and good luck with your project.
Bob

Hi,

I am using Photoshop 6.0 and following your instructions from Sketch on Digital Coloring. After setting up the layers i begin to color and something does not seem right. When i go to use the airbrush or lasso and fill solid colors do not appear The only color that appears are a few colored bytes.

Can you help?
Michael Kotora

Hmmm,

Make sure your settings are at 100% for the pressure on your airbrush or brush settings, and also make sure they are set to "Normal". Also check your layer settings.. it may be set on something odd to make it do this. Are you using a mouse or a tablet? Sometimes these settings can conflict as well

Does it only do it with this piece, or is it happening on everything you work on? Try experimenting on the bottom layer first, then add your second. If it starts acting funny on that second layer, then chances are it's the layer settings.

-Aaron

Aaron,

I've recently acquired Photoshop 6 and I've been experimenting with it coloring some of my art. I've been following your tutorials in the pages of Sketch and they've been a big help They've given me direction with a lot of things I wouldn't have been able to figure out.

However, I've hit a brick wall. I am not able to save my colored work as a jpeg successfully. The following is what happens when I try to save the finished colored image as a jpeg the only thing that successfully saves is the color When I open the image the black line work is gone. So all that I'm left with is the color without the line work.

I tried printing the colored image. When I did this the colors only printed without any of the black linework Right after the colors printed the black and white line work printed. Strange, eh?

I've been fooling around with it and I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. One of my theories was that I didn't merge or flatten the CMYK channels that I used to color the image If that's the case I am unable to flatten them. I am not given the option.

I hope you can give me a little hand with this Thank you for your time and I look forward to your next column in Sketch

Sincerely,
Tom Karpe

Tom,

One thing you have to do is "Apply" the black and white line if you are using channels. Go to Image>Apply Image. Make sure you have the settings on Multiply, and that you have selected the channel where your line art is Once the black line is applied, you can discard that channel Hopefully it should fix the problem when you go to print
-Aaron

Shawn Coolidge

Jon Colton

PAT QUINN'S
INKS
Coming to Terms with Your Inks

"What, so now you're an inker?" you ask.

Well, no, nor do I play one on TV. So there's my disclaimer...however, you will find some useful information in this article since what I'm going to be covering are fairly basic - but very important - points about inking that everyone involved in making comic art should be aware of To help you easily become familiar with some of the terms and techniques we'll be looking at, please note that some of the accompanying illustrations show an exaggerated version of the technique being discussed. This should also make for speedy referencing – we don't want that ink drying on your brush tip.

Usually, when you hear comic artists who understand the task talk about inking, we are not talking about the act of "tracing." That is entirely different. Most knowledgeable comic book folk think of inking as "embellishing." Our good friend the American Heritage dictionary defines embellishing as:

"v. 1. to make beautiful, as by ornamentation; decorate."

I think for the purpose of this article we will stick pretty close to that. The inker's task is to take "raw" pencils and add something special to them, something that improves the image's legibility, while he ping create the illusion of three-dimensionality. An inker can also help with the design aspect of an image by manipulating black and white areas to guide the eye through a panel or page. Helping control the mood of an image is also something that the inker can lend to an image or story. So we're all on the same wavelength now, right? Good!

Let's start with some thoughts on the inker's best friend: the line We all know what a line is, but in the discipline of inking there are some specific lines. Today, we'll talk about three of those:

Figure 1 is the *dead weight line*, or a uniform weight line. The line's size is always constant. (Keep in mind you can have a uniform line weight of any size, thick or thin, but it's always that size.)

Fig. 1

In Figure 2 we have a *tapered line*. This line changes in weight, with one end being significantly thicker than the other. You will find these lines commonly used in feathering techniques.

Fig 2

The last line we'll discuss is the line in Figure 3, which is a *varied weight line*. Notice how it goes from thick to thin to thick. A great line for inkers to command, and really useful on the contours of objects.

Fig. 3

"What? What's a contour?" I'm glad you asked....

At first glance it might look like a contour is an outline, but you would be mistaken. Take a look at Figure 4, what do you see? My friends, that is an *outline* of something resembling an apple. Compare that image to the one in Figure 5, which is a *contour*. In both drawings I used a (relatively) dead line weight, but in the contour drawing the line "cuts in" to the apple shape in a few spots. Those little marks make all the difference between and outline and a contour.

Part of the penciler's job is to create the illusion of depth in his drawing, even though he/she is drawing on a flat surface. This is done by creating a *foreground* (the part of the picture that appears closest to the viewer), the *middle ground* (the part of the picture that is behind the foreground and a little farther away from the viewer), and the *background* (the part of the picture that is behind everything and is furthest away from the viewer. Earlier I mentioned that an inker can help to create the illusion of three-dimensionality. With our line weights and contours in our heads, let's put them to some use.
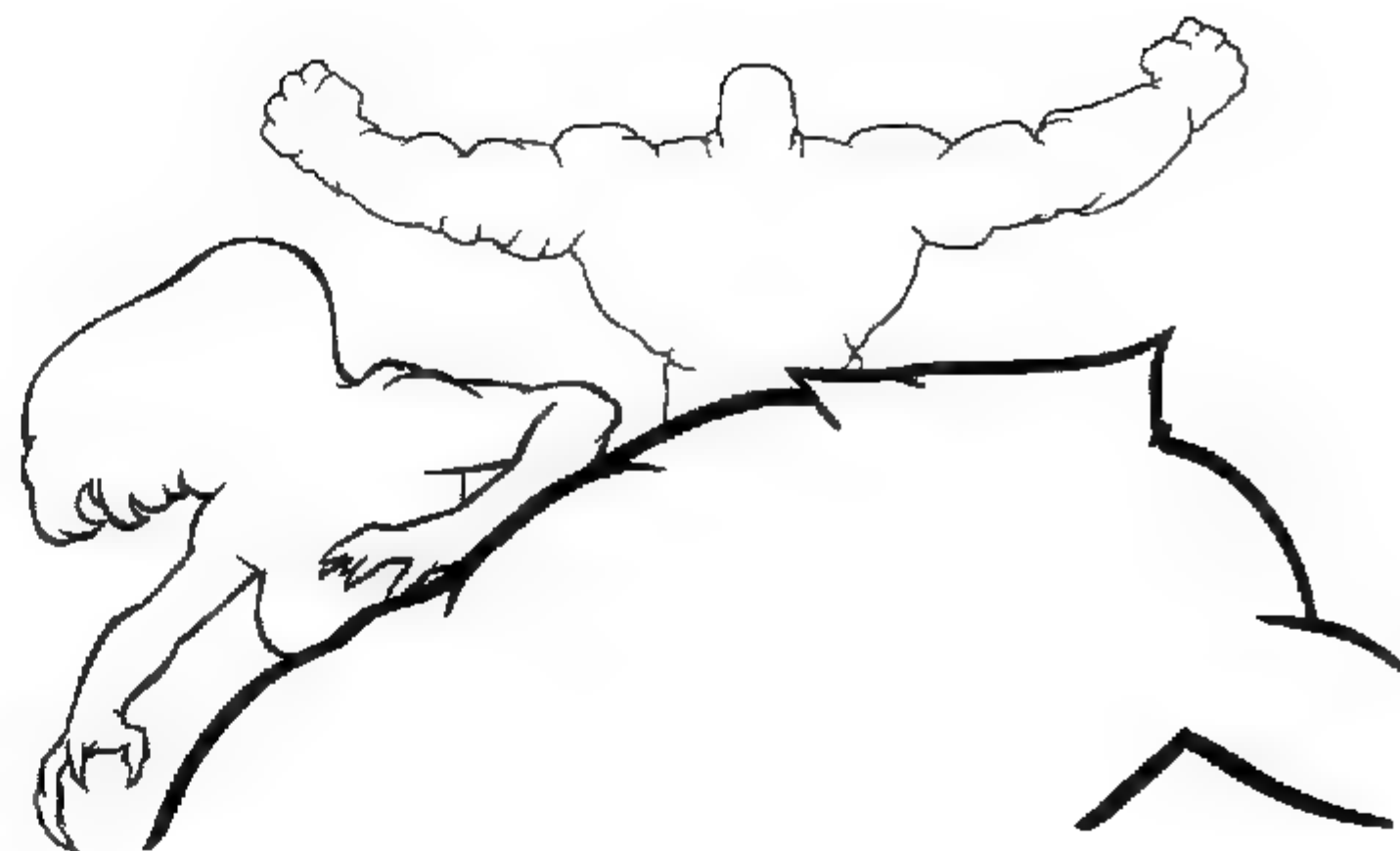
Fig. 4

Fg 5
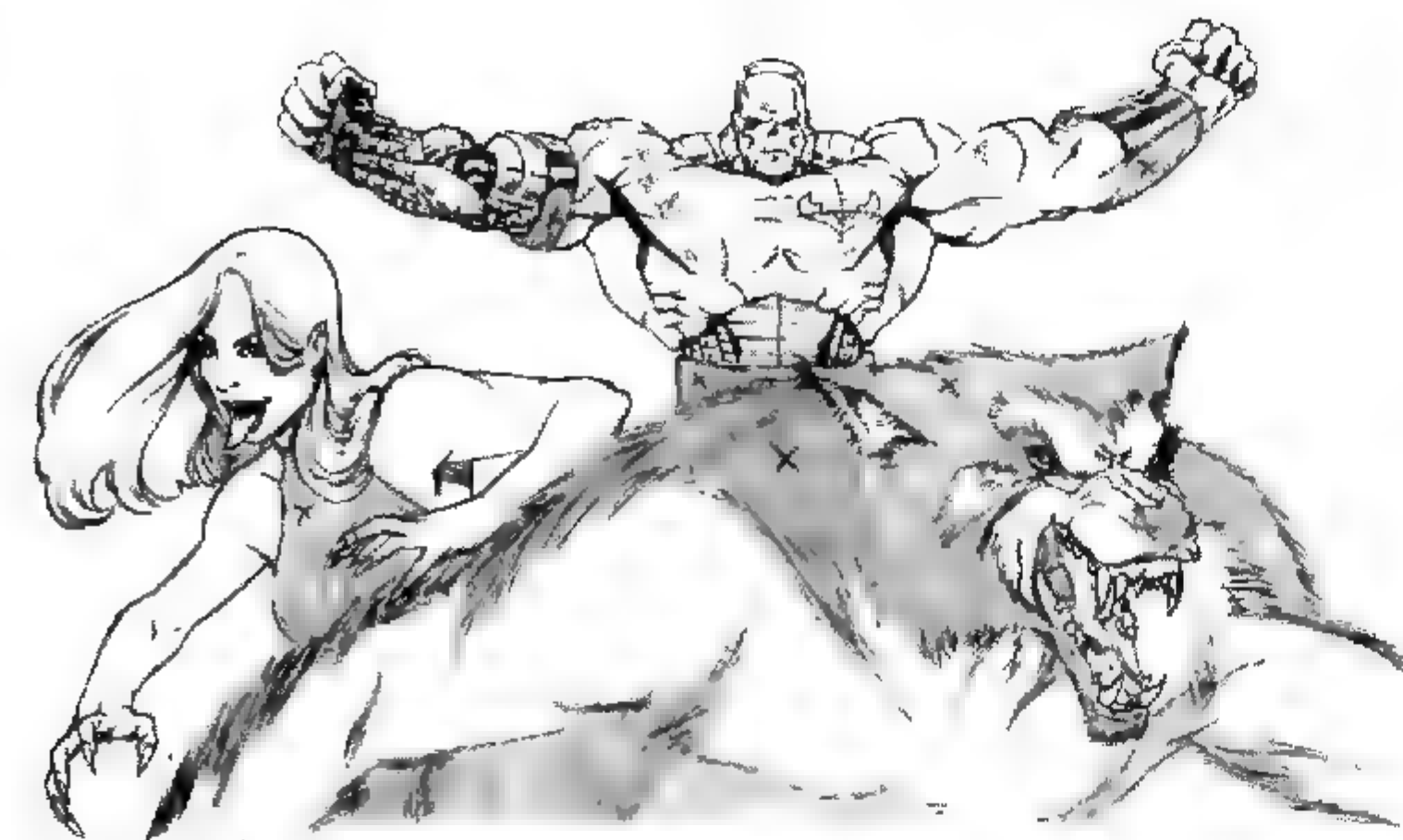
Fig 6

Fig. 7

There are some overlapping characters in Figure 6, how would you help separate them in space? Take a look out of a nearby window...see if there is something close by to study, then something further back, and even further away. You'll notice that whatever is closest to you is in sharper focus and its details are more clear. As the objects move further away from us they loose this clarity (well, actually they don't loose it, we just can't see it as well...this effect is part of something called atmospheric perspective). We can achieve this effect, or the illusion of this effect, with our line weights. Generally speaking, keep your thickest contour lines in the foreground, and thinnest in the background. Check out Figure 7 and see if that makes sense to you.
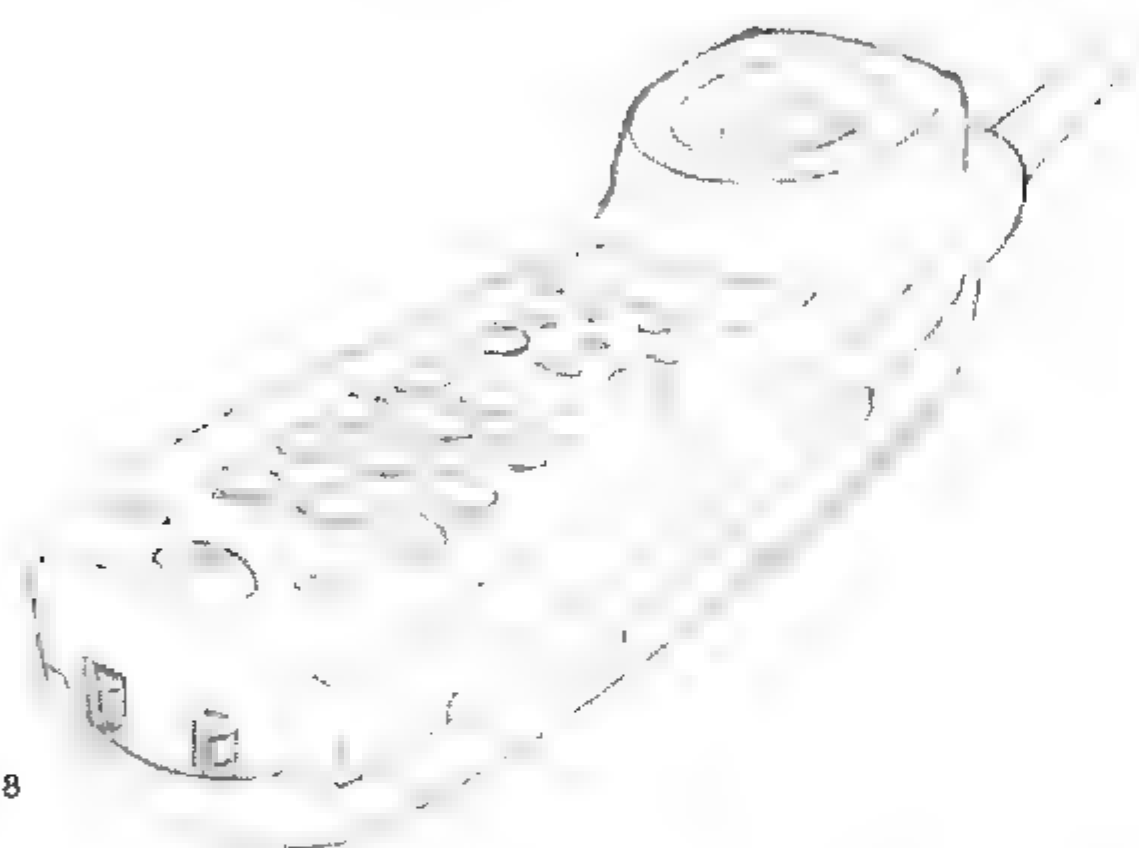

Fig. 8
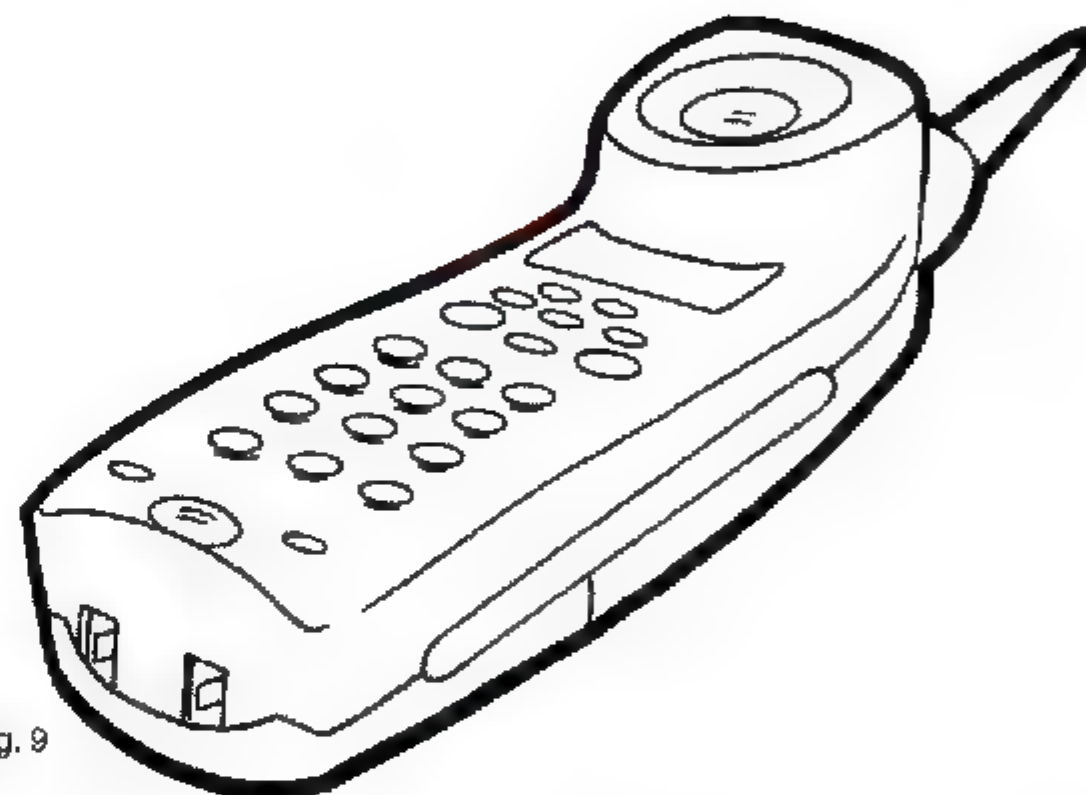

Fig. 9

So, what about all that stuff that's inside the contour? I'm glad you asked. If you look at Figure 8 you'll see that this rough drawing of a phone doesn't have any differing line weights. As an inker, you want to make that object as visually solid as possible. One way to do that is to let your contour line act as a *containing line*. The containing line helps to "hold" an object together, and is generally thicker than the interior lines. I exaggerated this principal a little in Figure 9 just to make the point.
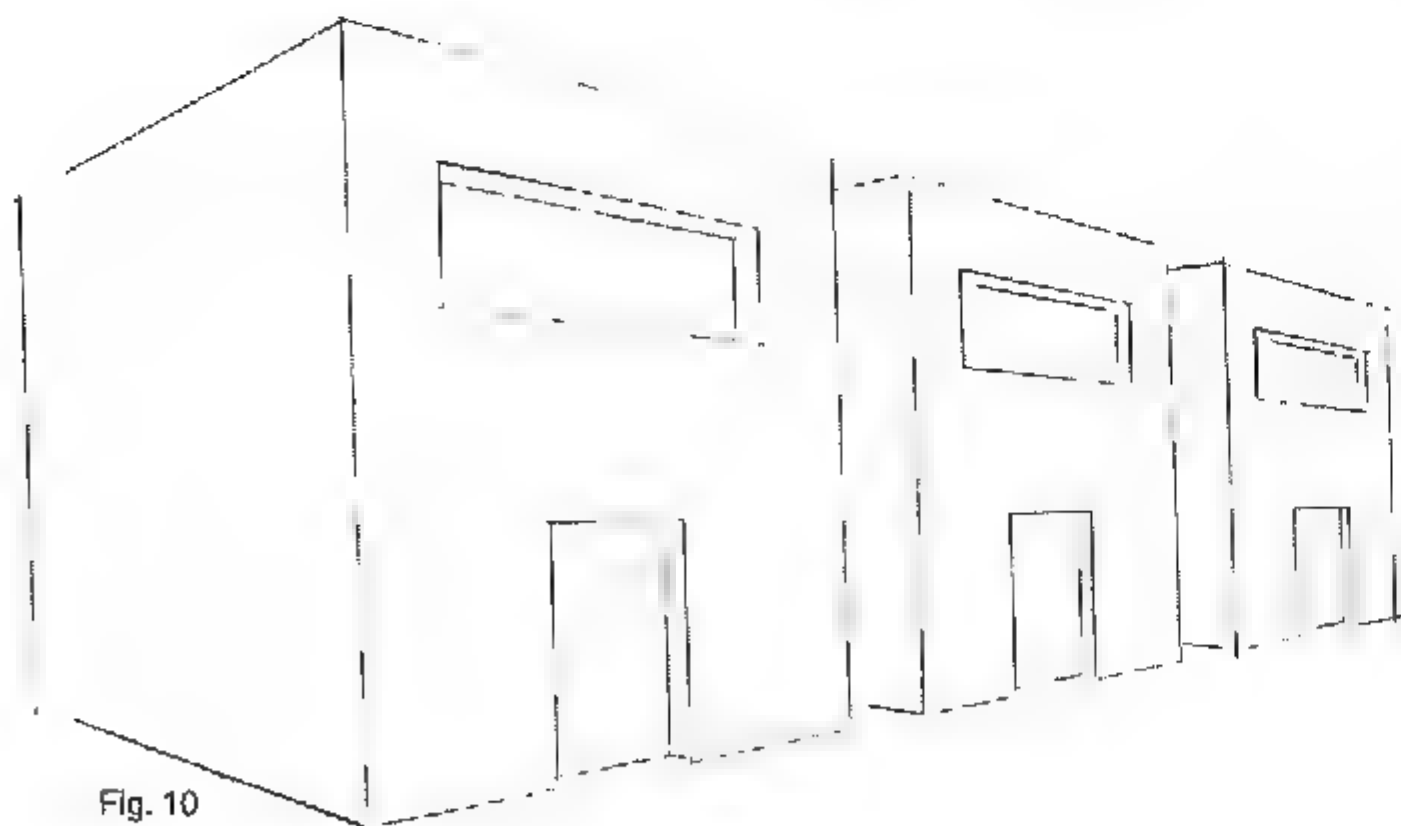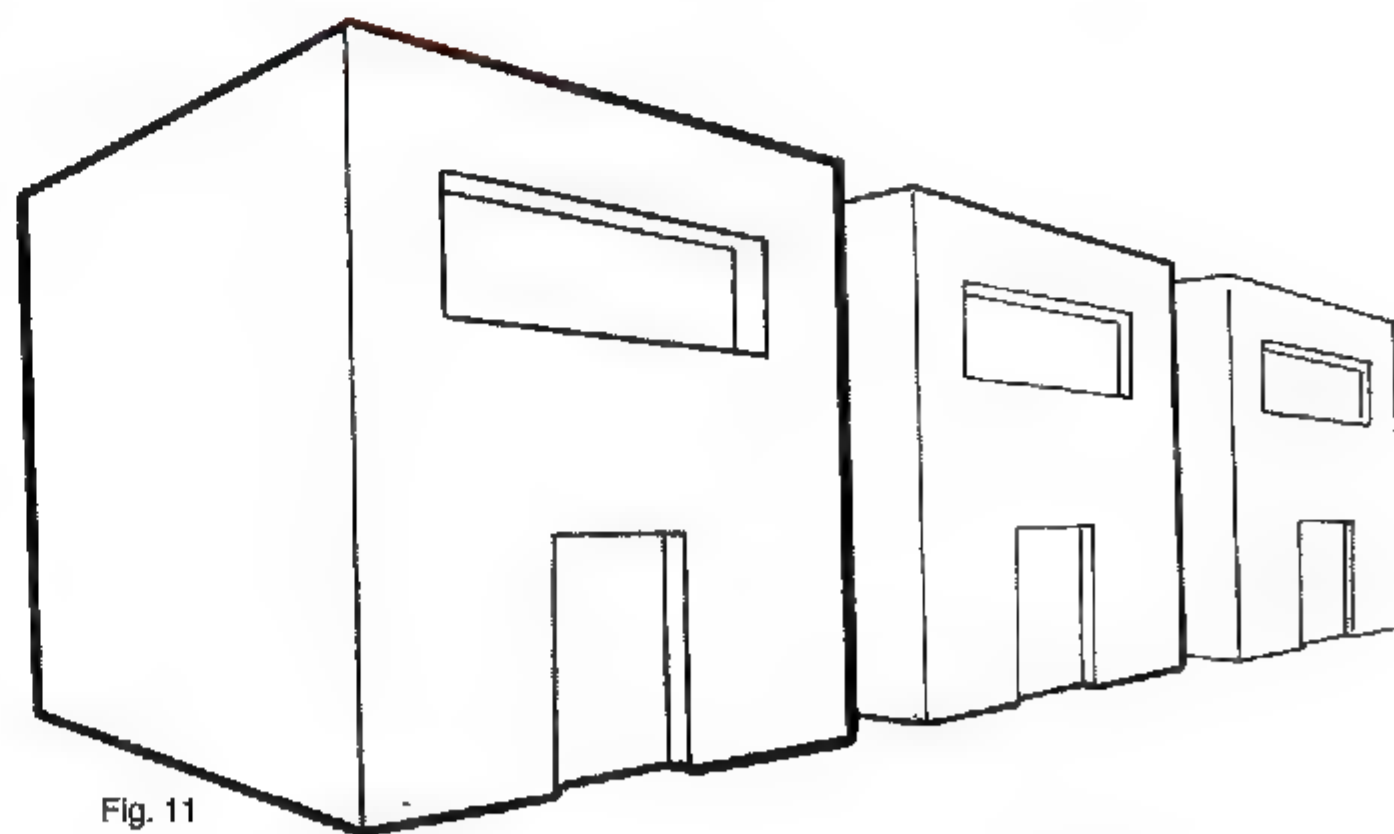

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Keeping in mind the idea of line weight helping to create the illusion of depth/space, let's put that together with our new containing line theory. Figure 10 has three simplified buildings (Don't ever draw buildings like this! Again, these were done for clarity) moving back in space. While the perspective helps achieve this illusion, we can embellish those buildings to make the illusion even stronger. With the building closest to us in Figure 11, I made the exterior contour very thick. Next I chose a slightly smaller line weight for the interior lines of the same building. Using that same line weight, I move on to the second building and ink its exterior contour. To ink the interior of that second building I pick an even smaller line weight, which then becomes the same line weight as the next building. Are you still with me? Super! Let's move on!
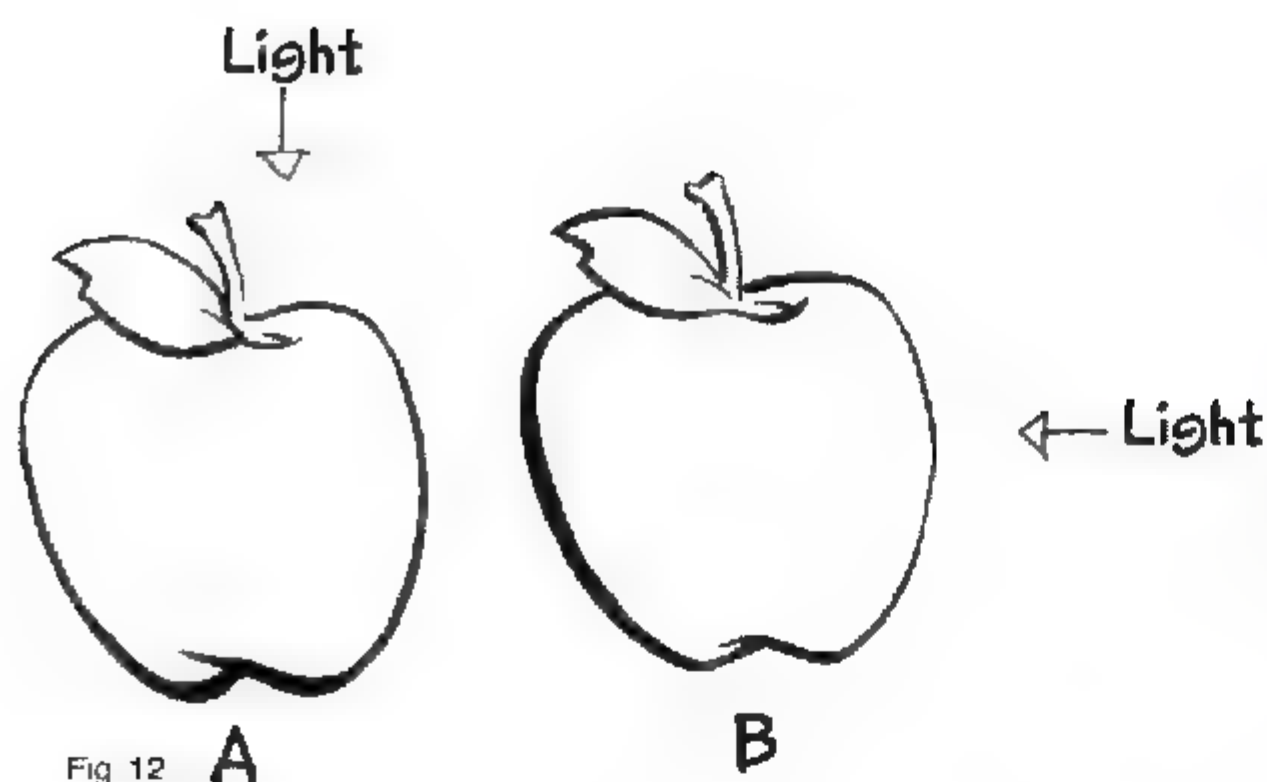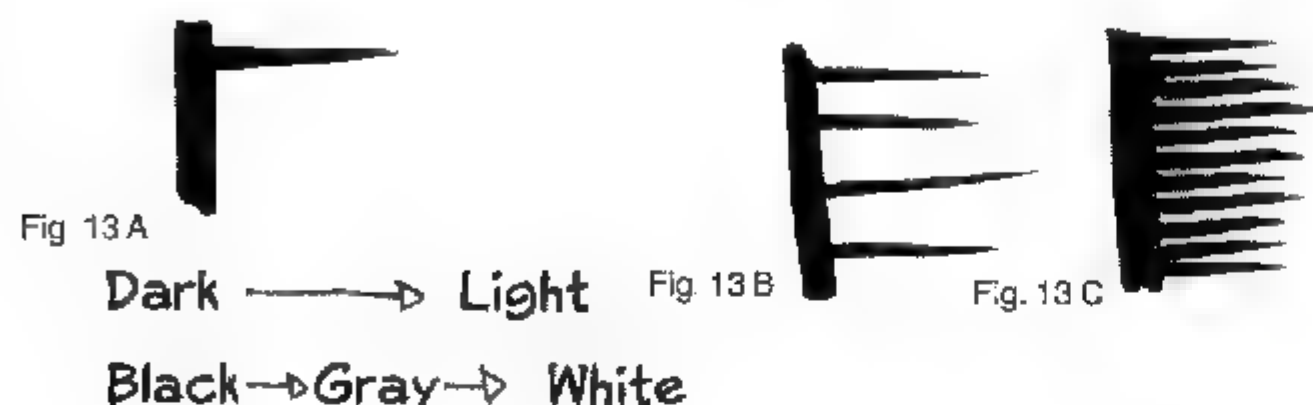
Light

Fig 12 A   B   ← Light

Fig. 13 A

Dark ——→ Light   Fig. 13 B   Fig. 13 C
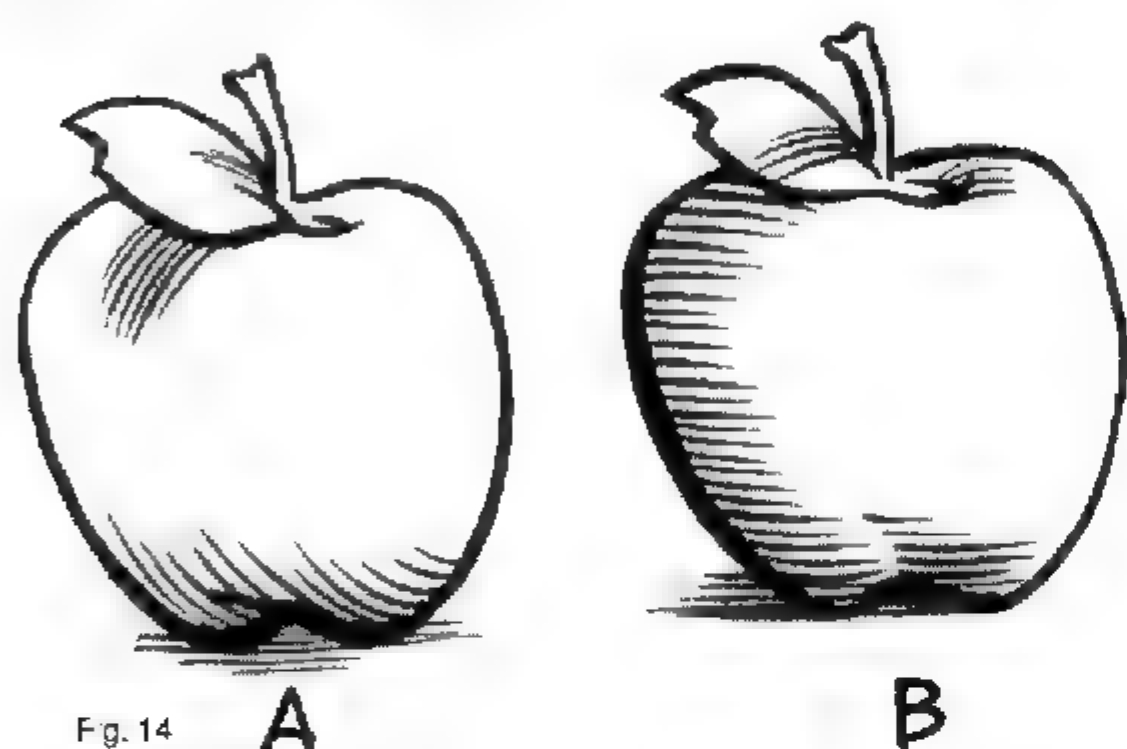
Black —→ Gray —→ White

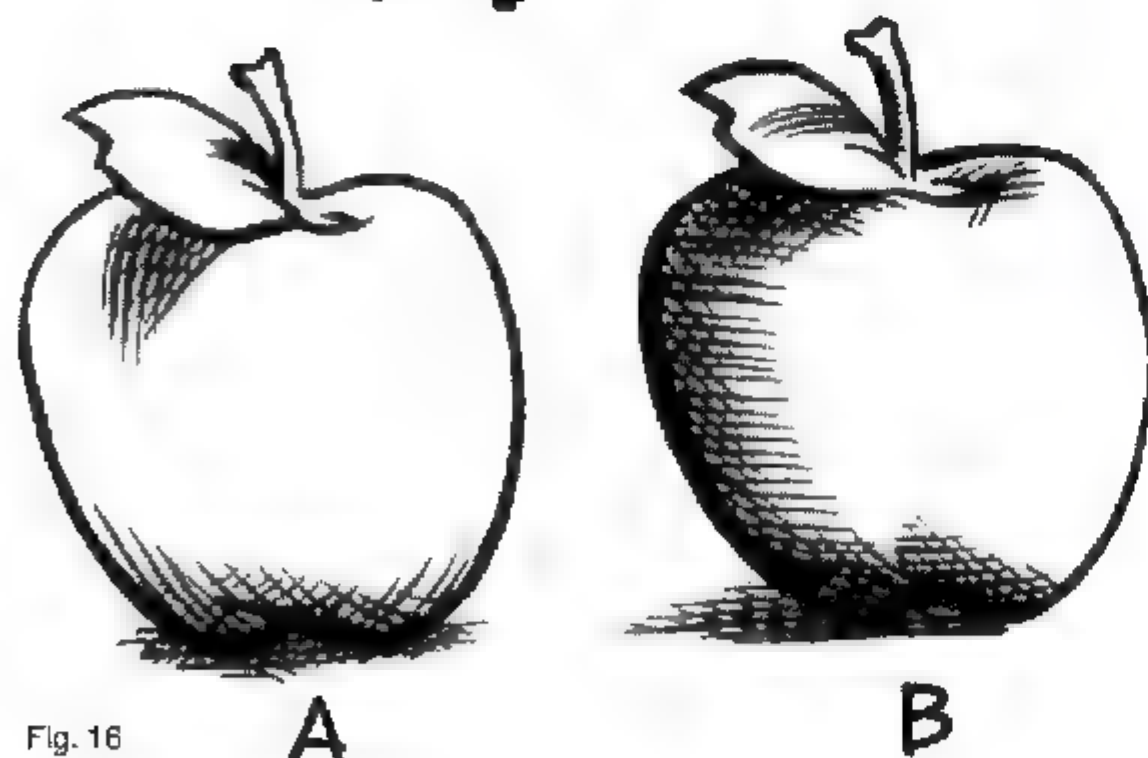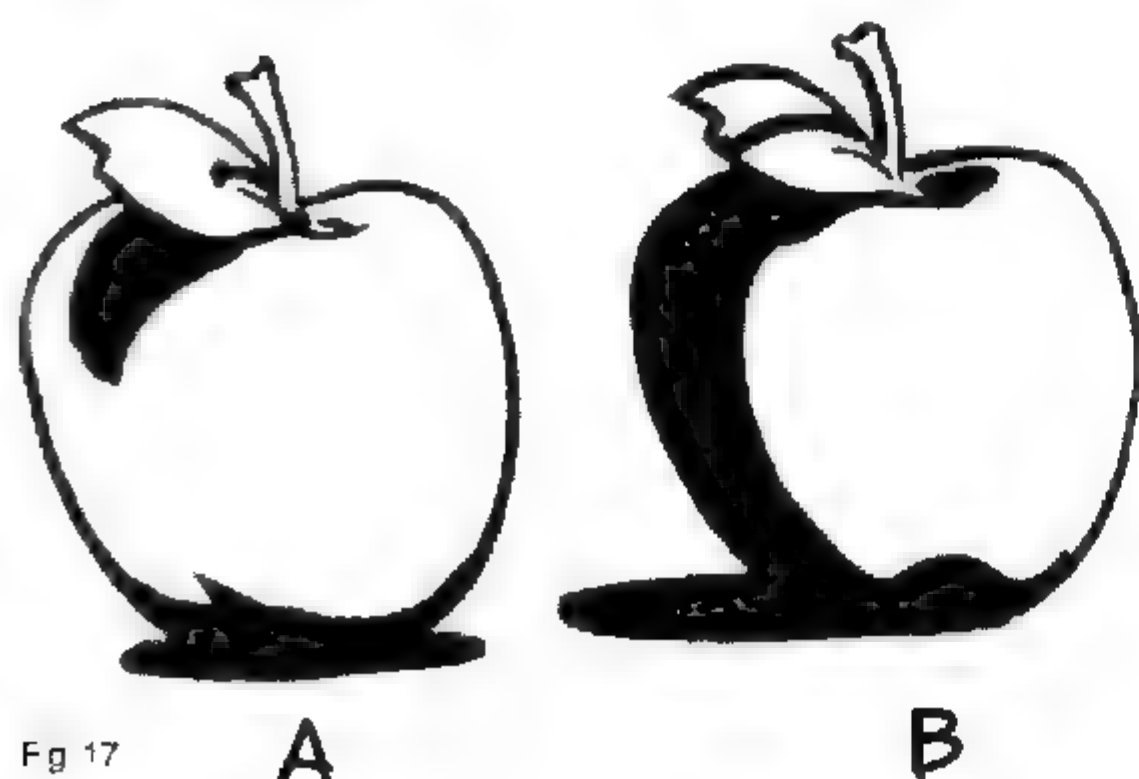Fig. 14 A   B

Fig. 15

Fig. 16 A   B

Fig 17 A   B

Remember our apples from the beginning? Let's look at those again, but this time we're going to think about how line weight can indicate a light source. We have two different apples in Figure 12 to study. Apple A is being lit from a light source that is above it, and Apple B is being lit from a light source to our right. With Apple A, notice that the line weight is thinner at the top and thicker at the bottom. The same applies to the leaf. This is meant to give the impression that more light is striking the top of the apple than on the bottom. What about Apple B? Where is the line weight thicker? The line weight should be thicker on the side that is not being struck by light.

"But, in comics there are all these little lines on everything, and stuff," says you. Right, well, that's another use of the line and line weight to indicate light and shadow. Look back at the three lines we discussed at the beginning of the article, in particular look at Figure 2, the tapered line. This is the single unit of the rendering technique known as *hatching*. In parallel hatching, the idea is that you are trying to create a smooth transition from a black/shadow area to a white/light area. Figure 13A has a black area with a single tapered line sticking out of it. Notice that the thickest part of the tapered line comes out of the black area. This will help create the transition from light to dark. Increasing the number of lines from 13A to 13B to 13C, you can see how this technique can build a transition from black, to gray, to white. So let's apply this to something…I know! How about an apple? Good thing we have Figure 14 just lying around. Our light sources are still the same as they were in Figure 12, we've just embellished the apples a little more. Here's another little thing to consider about using lines for rendering/shading – those lines can also describe volume. Look at how some of the feathering seems to turn or bend, helping describe the form of the apple. (Pretty useful!)

"But there aren't enough lines! Comics have more lines," says you. Yes, well, how about if we add more lines to our hatching? How about adding lines that move in different directions? Figure 15 may look similar to our old friend Figure 13A, but pay close attention to that other line growing from the black area in a diagonal manner. Notice that it crosses the line that moves from left to right. When you get a gaggle of these lines together, you have *cross-hatching*. Our apples are back in Figures 16A and 16B, and this time they feature our new cross-hatching. And look…cross-hatching does all the same things as parallel hatching, but the bonus is that you can make more of a gray area between your black and white. You are not limited to just the two lines that have been demonstrated, you can use a multitude of lines which can vary in weight and length. Draw some empty squares in your sketchbook and try out some different cross-hatchings!

What happens if the penciler's technique doesn't call for hatching, or your inking technique doesn't include hatching? Is there another way to add some solidity to an image? How about a little something called *spotting blacks*? Yes, sometimes it falls to the inker to determine what areas need a big splotch of solid black. Once again, we turn to our apples in Figure 17A and 17B. The light sources for each apple haven't changed, but this time there isn't any rendering other than creating larger black areas to help indicate light and mass. Spotting blacks isn't limited to specific objects, it can be used to help set a mood, or simply as a design element in an illustration.

Let's examine Figures18A-18E. Figure 18A is the pencil drawing we are going to work with. As an inker we want to look at what is and isn't in the drawing…it's fairly tightly penciled, so we won't have too much guess work…'t's an open/cartoony style, so we may not want to do much rendering, if at all…there is no indication of black areas…and no indication of line weights. So as an inker, this assignment gives us room to breathe and truly embellish the drawing. Earlier I pointed out that inking is different than tracing, right? While 18B does have black ink over the line work, it's not doing much to improve the work, is it? So let's try something with 18C, let's change some line weights. Our new lines are still more or less a dead line, but see how the thicker line weight of the figure in the foreground really helps make the figure pop out? Even the slightly increased line weight around the seated figure separates that figure from the background. Moving away from the dead line, let's add a line whose weight has a little variety. The foreground figure in 18D has the most obvious change, sporting a new contour which has areas of thick and thin. Even the flame trail, smoke, and seated figure have lines that are a little varied.
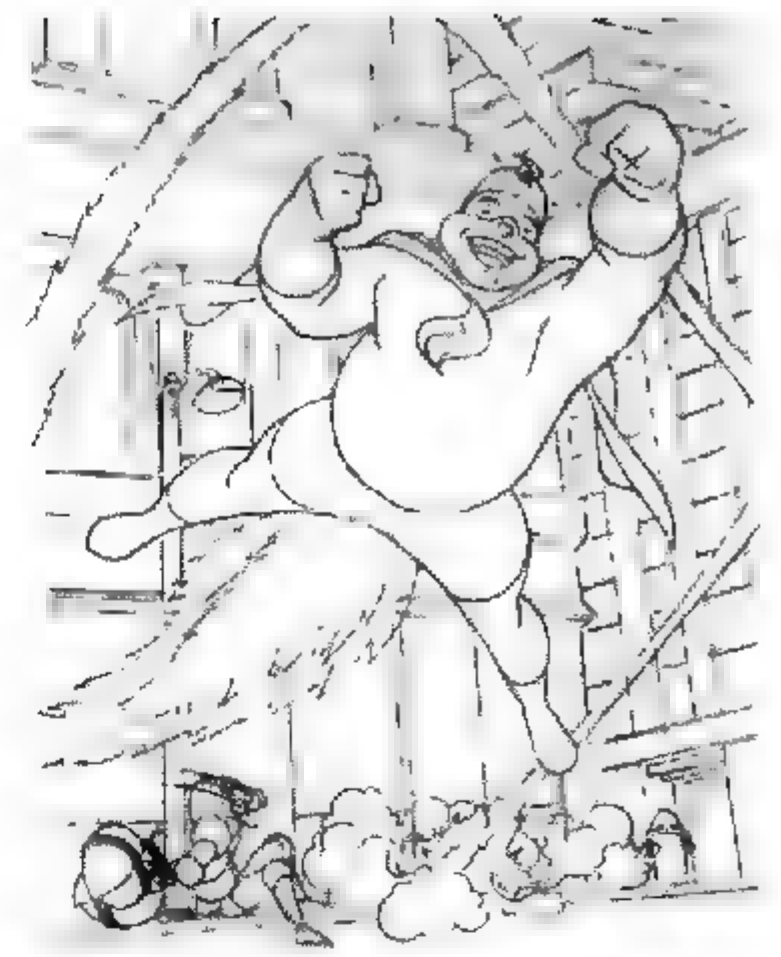
Fig 18 A

Fig. 18 B

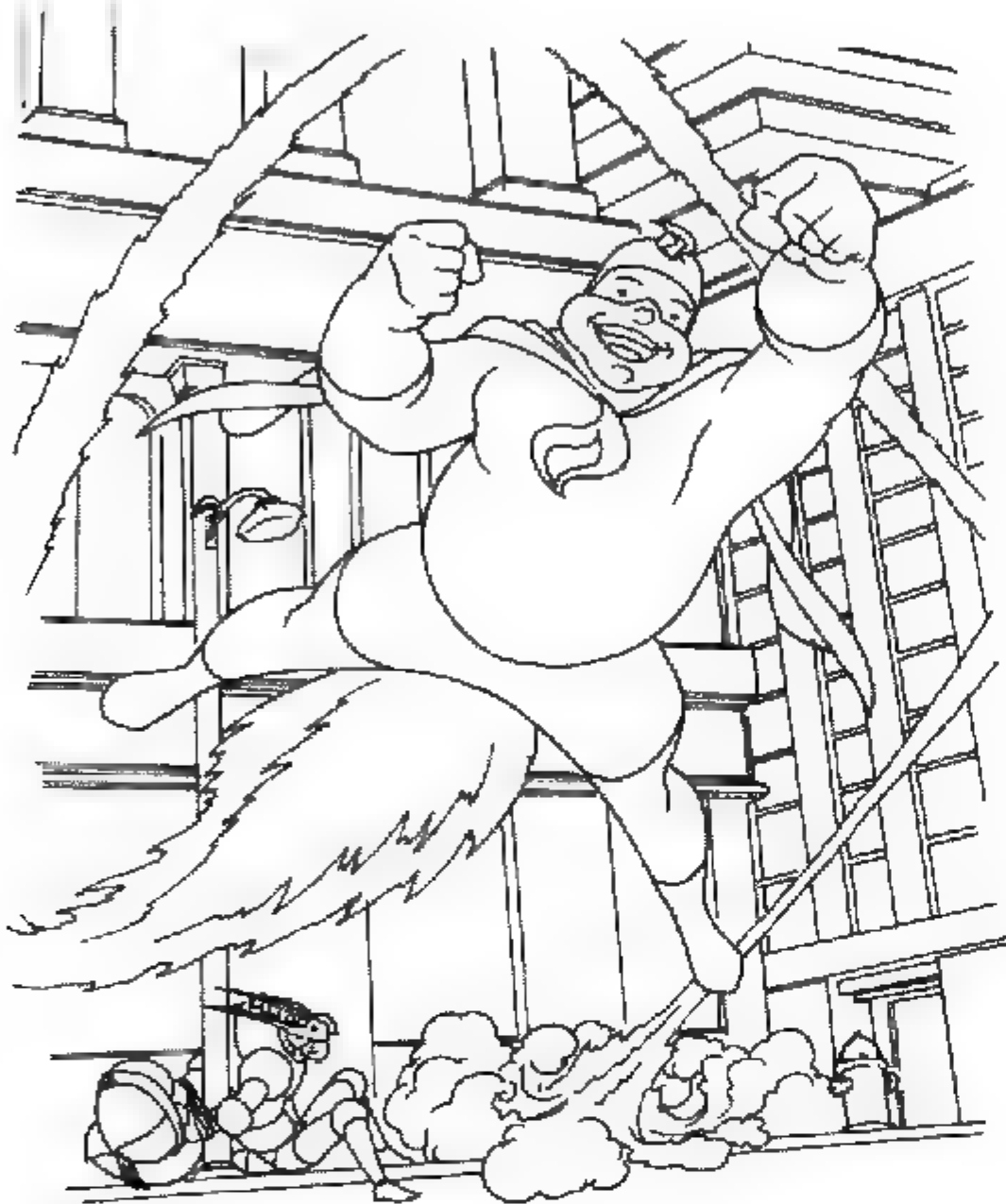Fig. 18 C

Fig 18 D

Fig. 18 E

Now we're thinking, using our ink work to help direct the viewer in "reading" the most important elements of the panel properly and easily. What next? How about spotting a few blacks? I chose not to put any black areas in the background building because I was concerned that it might draw attention away from the foreground and middleground figures…What do you think?
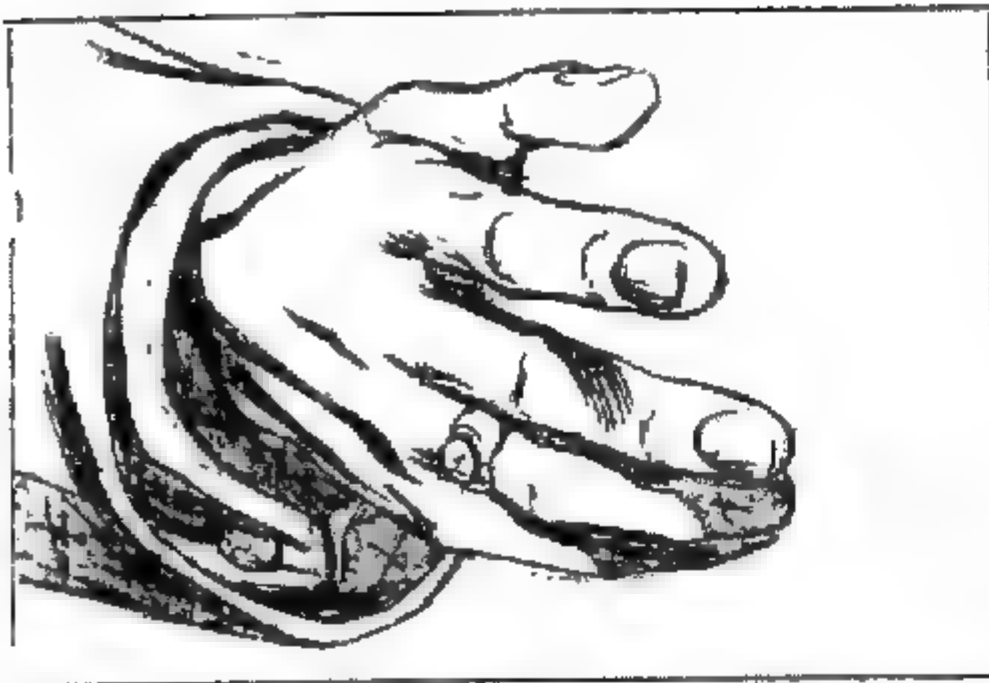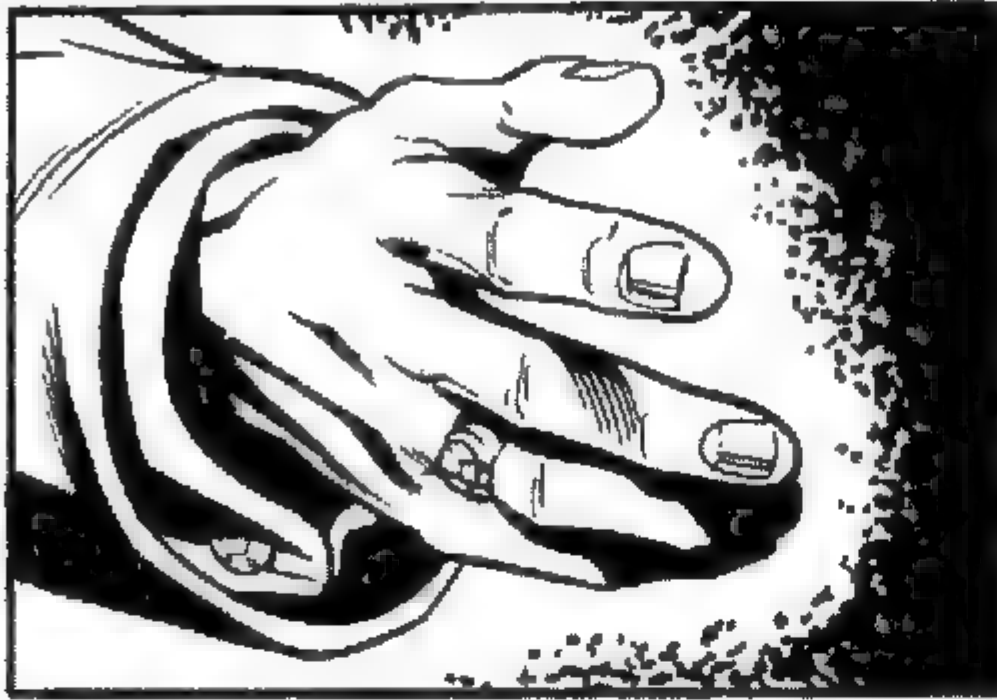
Fig 19 A

Fg. 19 B

Here are some examples from a real inker and a real comic book. Figures 19 – 21 are from the first issue of *Cryptopia*, which was written by Ben Raab, penciled by me, and inked by John Lowe. Now you can see how a real inker would tackle a specific problem. Look over each set of panels, and compare the pencil drawing to the inked version. See if you can identify any techniques, and the reason why that specific technique was used.

There's certainly a lot more to inking comics than what is described here, but hopefully this will familiarize or clarify many points for you and give you a decent working vocabulary to start your inking. f you're a penciler, this might remind you of all the things your inker has to consider, and the possibilities open to both of you in terms of how your final art will appear. You should both also consider how your work will be colored and reproduced. Knowing what each creator is trying to achieve - and the techniques to do so successfully - should make for an incredible team, and some incredible panel work!
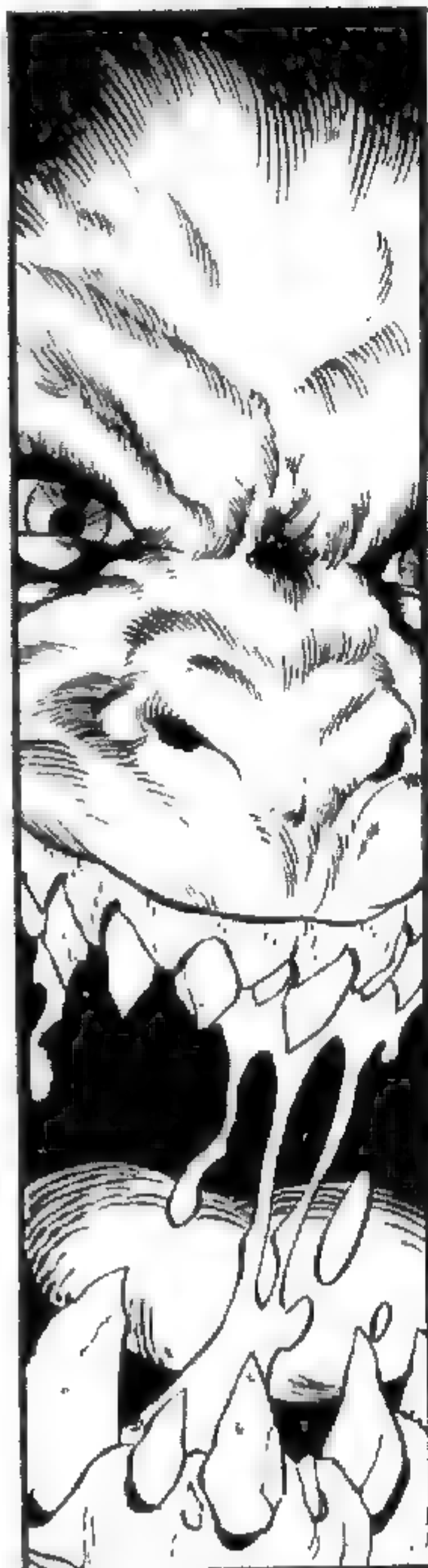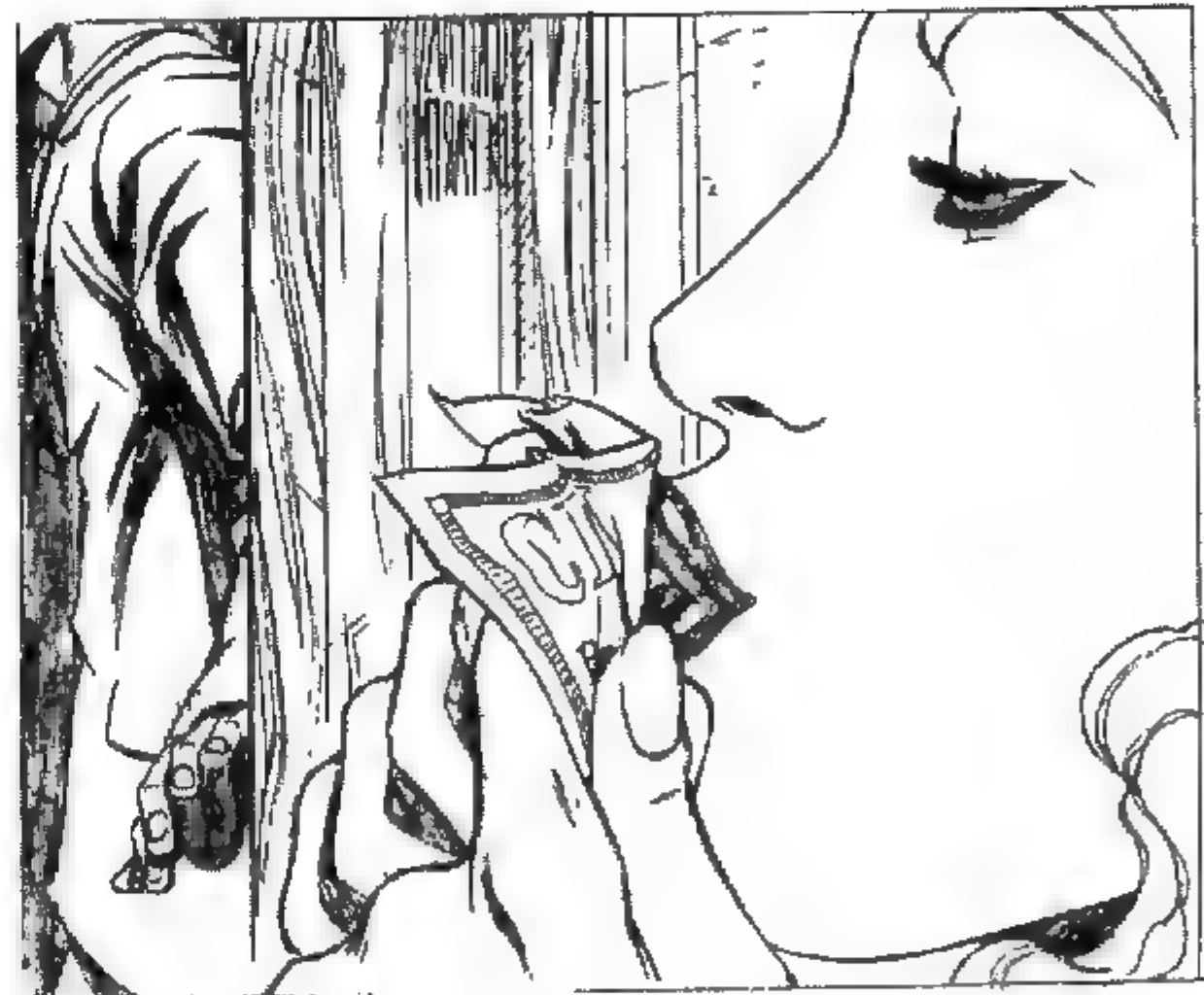

Fig 20 A

Fg. 20 B

Fig. 21 A

Fig. 21 B

AARON H... DIGITAL COLORS

Grayscaling: It's the next best thing

If you were to ever publish a comic, chances are, you would publish it in black and white. As bland as it may seem, it is a common reality we all face, especially when you have a budget. Color comics are expensive to produce and expensive to print for sure. Don't feel down and out though! You can make your black and white book shine with the best of them by following these easy steps.

I'll bet most of you have read a few coloring articles in your time, so you know the basics of applying color to your line art. That's good, because the same logic will apply to grayscaling your line art. You may ask yourself, "Well, all I have to do is color the art in color and switch the mode to grayscale." Not so fast there Skippy!! Do you want your stuff to look like a big gray mess? Heck no! We want to define all the areas of each panel. The only way to truly do that is in the grayscale mode.

Let's go over some basics for those of you just starting: Scan in your line art as a Bitmap (or grayscale). I would suggest scanning in your work at 600 dpi. Once you have the line art scanned and in Photoshop, go to image>image size. Make the resolution 300 dpi. Now you'll want to clean it up by removing unwanted specks, eraser marks, girlfriend's phone numbers, etc. Once you have the line art cleaned up, change your mode to grayscale (image>mode>grayscale), select all (select>all), and copy (edit>copy). Here is where we want to create an extra channel for your line art so it's protected. Go to your channels window and click on the button in the top right hand corner. Select "new channel". Another window will pop up. Name this Alpha channel "line art". Make sure the color is black and at 100 %. Also make sure Masked Areas is checked on. Click O.K. and the area should go black. Go to Edit>Paste. This should paste in your line art into this channel. Click on the other channel (it's probably named gray) and fill this with white (edit>fill). This is the channel we will be working on. To see the line art reappear/disappear, just click on the eyeball icon next to the channel name…Just make sure you "color" on the gray channel.

One other way to work is by adding another layer and setting it to "multiply". Now the line art below it is not effected. Since we're working with files a lot smaller than what color would normally be, this should be an easy way to get started for anyone not wanting to fiddle with channels. So let's color in grayscale!

Here, we have a nice quiet color scene. The challenge is, it's got to be in black and white. Study it carefully…Could you just convert the color to grayscale? Sure - you just might get lucky. Chances are, you're going to have to start from scratch just to make sure it doesn't look muddy.

The picture above shows what happens if I just turn the color file to grayscale. It's O.K., but I want to ad more depth. I did this by selecting each element within the panel. This is easily done using channels. Just use the Paint Bucket tool on a "block" of gray and change it to what level of black you want using the sliders. The final piece is shown below with the changes I thought made the scene have more depth.

Without the line art you can see each part to select and change. Yes, it's that easy!

These subtle changes make the scene have more impact and allows you to stear the viewer where you want.

100 %

70%

55%

45%

35%

25%

20%

15%

10%

Sample Steps
in Grayscaling
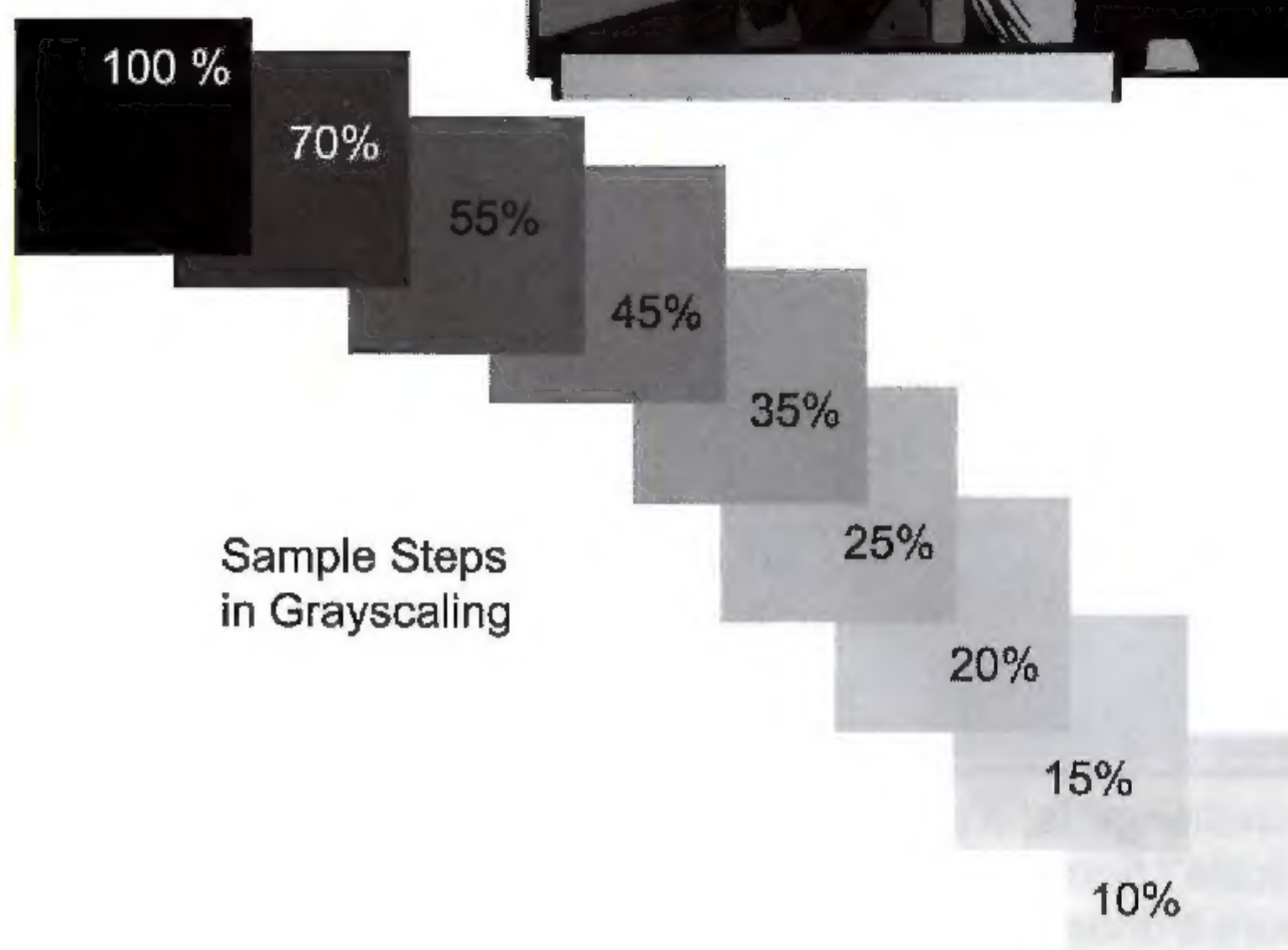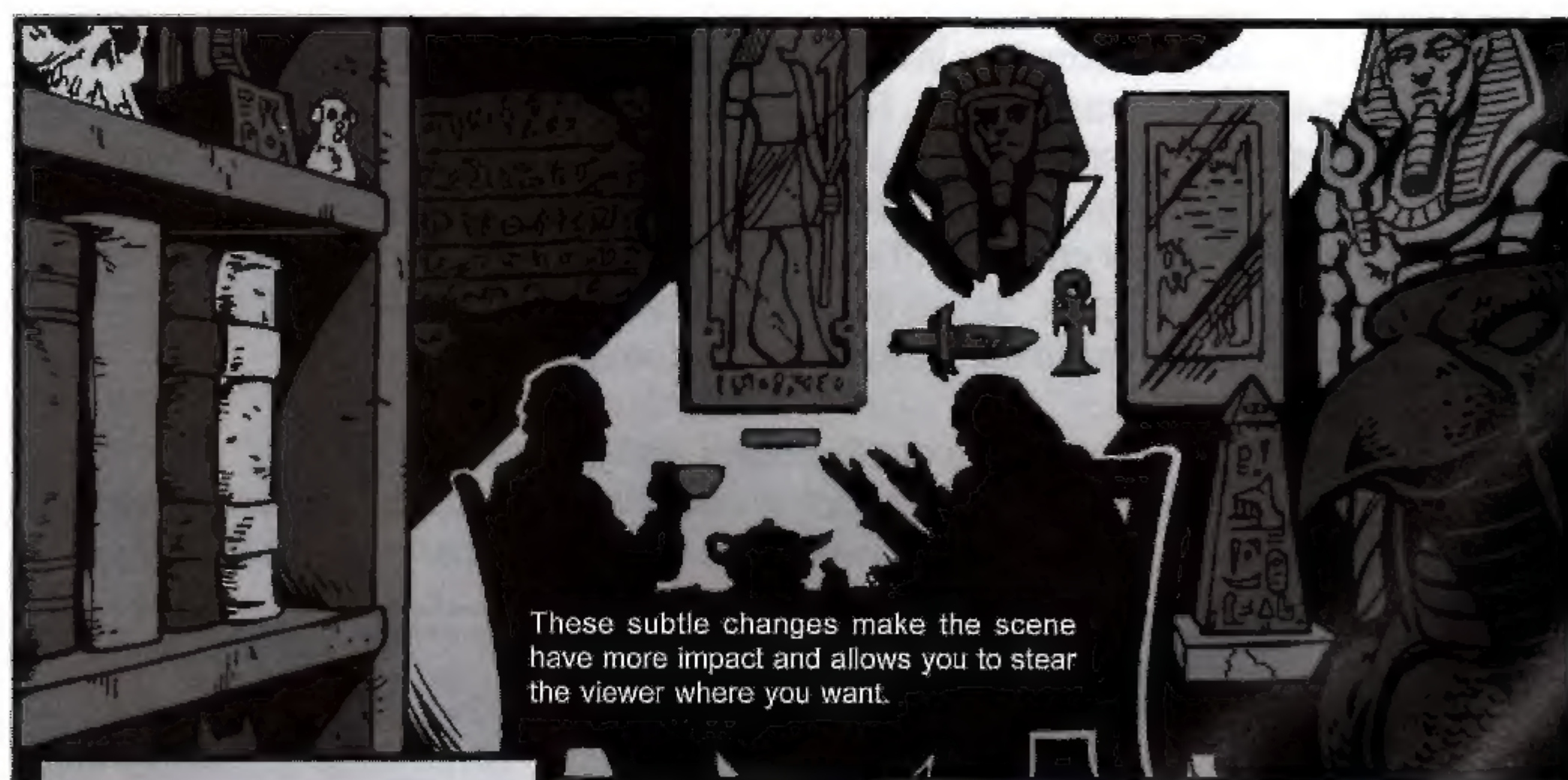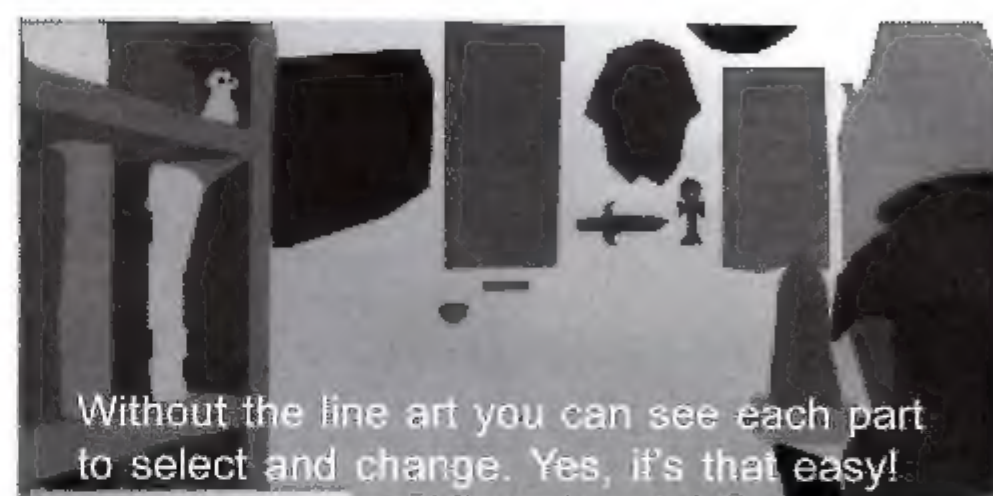
I personally like these percentage steps in gray. Notice how the darker gray blocks don't separate from each other as much as the lighter blocks. This will only get worse with a lower quality paper stock, so be careful. I would recommend staying above 10% black because some paper stocks may be too dark to even show anything less than this amount.

So if you have Photoshop, and a good comic book that should go to print, use this info to help you get it out there. Until next time...Happy "coloring"!

Bob Hickey
Along with his duties as publisher of Sketch Magazine, he is the creative force behind Blood & Roses, StormQuest, and Tempered Steele. He currently has a new Blood and Roses project in the works along with his new creator owned series Race Danger, both will be appearing at BLP Comics.
Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Productions.
He can be reached at bobh@bluelinepro.com
www.bluelinepro.com

Flint Henry
WizKids/Mage Knight, Ral Partha, and other companies utilize the fantastical concepts pulsating from his Nyarlathopean pencil point – icing on the appendage after more than a decade of delineating disturbed, dark, and violent characters such as Grimjack, Lawdog, Manbat, and the occasional demonic Batman.

Chuck Dixon
With the successful launch of Way of the Rat hard on the heels of his commandeering Sigil and Crux, this new transplant becomes a key chronicler at CrossGeneration Comics. He'll continue to bring his respected, popular, and prolific scribing to bear in expanding the excitement of the CrossGen canon!

M² a.k.a. Mike Maydak
M² has now been working for Blue Line Pro for the past four years. In that time, he has learned much from the experienced crew at Sketch about the comic industry and has mastered the technique of "getting lunch". He often contributes in the form of graphic design, writing, and editorial work.

Bill Baker
Bill Baker has established himself as one of the preeminent interviewers in the comics journalism community. After getting his start as a reporter on a now-defunct website, he graduated to doing both long and short form interviews for two of the best known comic book sites on the web, Comic Book Resources and Wizard World. This lead to his articles and interviews appearing in print magazines, including Comic Book Marketplace and Comic Buyers' Guide, as well as Fantastic Visions: The Art of Matt Busch, by Avatar Press in 2001.

Beau Smith
Beau created and writes Parts Unknown and Primate, currently at Image Comics. He's scripted The Undertaker for Chaos Comics, The Tenth, Wynonna Earp, Spawn: Book Of Souls, Wolverine/Shi, Batman/Wildcat and several Star Wars stories for Dark Horse, as well as the upcoming Xena/Wonder Woman crossover.
See more of Beau at www.flyingfistranch.com

Tom Bierbaum
Tom, with wife Mary, has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures, a creator owned project by Knight Press.

Aaron Hübrich
Aaron was going to be the next great fantasy painter, but something caught his eye in college - comics! From then on he never looked back, focusing on making an impact on the the comic book industry. In the 90's he learned a lot by self publishing, and working for several larger publishers. A few years ago he became interested in digital coloring, and is now contributing his skills to major publishers.
Aaron has authored a book showing the "step by step" process on how to make comic books come to life using Photoshop. If you were ever interested in how to color for comics, then you really need to check out this book!

Pat Quinn
Pat has drawn comics for several publishers. His work includes Gen 13, Writer's Bloc Annual, Necrotic, and Image Introduces...Cryptopia. Pat has also illustrated several projects for Idea and Design Works, including Bionicle trading cards and the comic adaptation of Origin's Ultima video game, as well as a Green Lantern story for DC Comics.
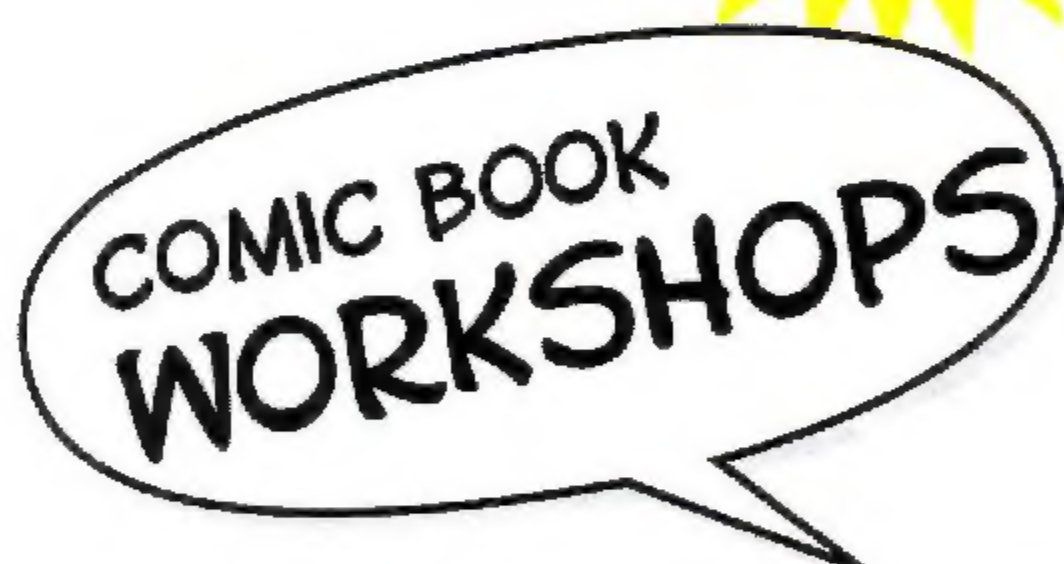
Mitch Byrd
Mitch's pencils have wowed everyone, from the sci-fi super-hero Guy Gardner crowd to the extreme-evisceration indulgers of Verotik comics. Enjoy his attractive, lighthearted art with our Sketch exclusives.

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